
HINDU MOTHER-GODDESS CULTS IN THE CARIBBEAN

Steven Vertovec

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IZVLEČEK

Med indijskimi priseljenci na Trinidadu so se obdržali trije kulti »boginje matere«, poosebljene v boginjah Parmeshwari, Kali in Sipari. Gre za oblike ljudskega čaščenja, ki imajo bolj ali manj ekstatičen in personalističen značaj, pomembna pa je zlasti njihova kurativna funkcija.

ABSTRACT

Hindu migrants in Trinidad have maintained three cults of "mother goddesses", embodied by the goddesses Parmeshwari, Kali and Sipari. These are popular forms of devotion of a more or less ecstatic and personalistic nature, important above all because of their healing function.

The North Indian countryside is dotted with shrines and cult centres to minor goddesses (ultimately conceived to be part of one Mother Goddess) who are usually associated with particular healing abilities. These shrines and cults are maintained by non-Brahman - often even low caste - religious practitioners. Despite the fact that these run against the grain of Brahmanic Hinduism, it is not surprising that in India such phenomena are profuse given their spread over vast regions, the size of low caste populations therein, and the sheer heterogeneity of ritual traditions among Hindus. Yet non-Brahmanic shrines and cults devoted to mother goddesses are still to be found among Hindus in the Caribbean one hundred and fifty years after migration and intervening socio-religious processes in which caste identities have largely attenuated and in which a single, Brahmanic tradition has come to dominate ritual activity.

In order to replace the African slaves who were freed between 1834-8, the Caribbean witnessed large scale migration of Indians under schemes of indentured labour (see Tinker 1974; Clarke, Peach and Vertovec 1990). A total of 238.909 Indians arrived between 1838-1917 into what was then British Guiana, 143.939 into Trinidad between 1845-1917, and 34.304 into Surinam or Dutch Guiana between 1873-1916. Jamaica, Grenada, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and other islands received smaller numbers during the latter half of the nineteenth century as well. In each case, Hindus formed the overwhelming majority of migrants (around 85%). Subsequently only between a fifth and a third of these migrants to the Caribbean returned to India, leaving populations of considerably size especially in the three southernmost territories.

Between the time of their introduction to the region and today, Hinduism -

hallmarked in India by a tremendous diversity of regionally varying beliefs, rites, deities and caste-specific traditions - has been transformed into a largely uniform complex (van der Veer and Vertovec 1991, Vertovec 1992, in press). This Caribbean Hindu complex is marked by a limited, "orthodox" corpus of beliefs and activities overseen by Brahmanic control of centralized organizations, schools and temples. Yet Hindu traditions outside of this "official" corpus continue to be practiced, largely because of beliefs surrounding their efficacy due to divine intervention. The three mother goddess traditions described here among Hindus in Trinidad, have been maintained over generations as peripheral, "non-orthodox", even publicly disdained sets of beliefs and rituals which nonetheless continue to be part of the lives of Hindus.

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Durga is considered by most Hindus in Trinidad to be the general embodiment of the Divine Mother, or female aspect of God. Most Hindus harbour vague beliefs about the relation of *Durga* to other goddesses (mainly *Lakshmi*, *Saraswati*, and *Kali*): when asked, individuals will ultimately insist these are all parts of the same goddess; some persons can even cite scripture or *Puranic* tales with reference to this. For example, when one Hindu priest had to use a *Lakshmi murti* to do *Saraswati puja* in the local Hindu school in Trinidad, since a child had brought the wrong one, he shrugged, continued his ritual procedures and simply remarked "same thing, same thing."

In prayer and ritual practice, however, each goddess is addressed as separate. There are prayers directed towards all female deities (*devis*), and one sometimes hears of devotions to "the nine *devis*" or "*shaktis*" (cosmic energies, associated with the Mother goddess) or "the nine *Lakshmis*". Beliefs concerning the multiple manifestations of goddesses characterize the fluid and indeterminate nature of lay ideology in Trinidad Hinduism. Though these collective sets of *devis* are regularly propitiated, rare is the villager who can name more than a few of them (two pundits, however, list the former nine as *Bhagwati*, *Bhegla mukhi*, *Bhumawati*, *Chitramasta*, *Bharbhee*, *Tara*, *Huneshwari*, *Vidya* and *Mahakali*, and the latter as *Gaja*, *Veera*, *Dhanya*, *Adhi*, *Sathana*, *Vijya*, *Aiswarya*, *Dhana*, and *Shri Lakshmi Narayan*).

Kali, in particular, has a very ambiguous place: she is sometimes regarded more importantly as a consort of *Shiva* than an aspect of *Durga*. *Kali* maintains a somewhat forbidding reputation in Trinidad, particularly because she is associated with blood sacrifice. The three traditions described here are locally equated with *Kali*: although faithfully engaged in by devotees, these traditions are looked about (upon) by many Trinidadians - Hindus and non-Hindus alike as strange or sinister due to this *Kali* connection.

PARMESHWARI

Parmeshwari, who is associated with Chamars or untouchables, is considered a "sister" or "manifestation" of *Kali*. The relation to *Kali* is rather vague, however, as are most *shakti* or goddess-related concepts. Klass (1961: 172-4) describes Parmeshwari rites entirely in terms of *Kali*, but also notes their reference to 'other goddesses - the "seven



Čamar recitira molitve boginji *Parmešvari*, medtem ko drugi moški pripravljajo prašiča za žrtvovanje in ženske čakajo, da pridejo na vrsto za darovanje. ♦ A Chamar man recites prayers to the goddess *Parmeshwari* while other men prepare a pig for sacrifice and women wait for their chance to make offerings.

sisters". Yet Planalp (1956: 166-8), who conducted research in a village of Uttar Pradesh, provides a myth suggesting that *Parmeshwari* was historically a Chamar girl, devoted to *Parvati* (*Shiva's* consort, and therefore coextensive with *Kali* and the Mother Goddess) who was eventually herself deified. Throughout large areas of North India she eventually became associated with Chamars and their particular form of goddess devotion.

The sacrifices should be conducted annually by a consortium of Chamar families, and by each separate Chamar family on the occasion of a birth or the marriage of a son. If of the collective sort, prior to the rites a set of Chamar women go from house to house in the village, banging a drum and singing a special song while collecting contributions toward the ritual expenses (the donors - who may all be Chamars - subsequently share in the goddess's favour).

Parmeshwari sacrifice can be performed by any man knowledgeable of the rites, with the assistance of one or more others (especially to hold the massive pig). The sacrifice should be performed on a boundary between two plots of land: this is an indication of the rite's unorthodox and therefore magically powerful nature). But most of the same items as for a more orthodox *Durga Puja* are offered: this includes *lepsi* (a glutinous paste) and *sohari* (a type of bread), *neem* leaves, and *dhar* (a liquid mixture of camphor, clove, *doob* grass, hibiscus flowers, *sindhus*, saffron, *neem* leaves, sugar rice and water). Other offerings here include onion, garlic, cumin, and salt - all considered *tamasic* substances (that is of the lowest order of the three *gunas* or universal substances - thereby further indicating *Parmeshwari's* lesser status compared to deities of the Sanskritic or Brahmanic pantheons). These offerings are set on the nine *paan* leaves, representing the "seats" of the various related goddess manifestations.

After a wooden stake is anointed, the heart of the pig is quickly pierced. Any participant may then pour *dhar* on the dead animal's head, and offerings of rum and

cigarettes are set before it. Traditionally at this point the goddess would "possess" or become present in the *pujari* or ritual practitioner, and healing directly at the hands of the deity could occur. Today this is less a part of the rites, while devotees still engage in offerings and prayer often with a mind to gain healing for themselves or their loved ones. The *lepsi* and *sohari*, pork meat, and alcohol are later consumed as holy food in a feast involving all who contributed, regardless of whether they were present at the sacrifice.

Although many other Hindus and non-Hindus think of *Parmeshwari* sacrifice as baleful and ominous, participants in no way see the rites in this way. (Nevertheless, during the course of one of such *Parmeshwari* rite, a participant gestured to an "orthodox" Hindu temple down the road to which all belonged, commenting about the sacrifice and the temple, "We mustn't mix this and that.")

182 Chamars believe they have a duty to propitiate *Parmeshwari*, who they believe to be their special group deity or *kuldevata*. It is an essential part of who they are and how they have descended. "This is the way the old people did things," says one man of the rites and his forebears, "so this is the way we do it." But by far most active participants these days are over forty years of age; they lament the fact young people currently have no desire to maintain these kinds of non-orthodox traditions, and they are fearful of the eventual loss of *Parmeshwari* sacrifice in Trinidad.

KALI MAI PUJA

Kali Mai Puja in the Caribbean consists of the most characteristic set of Hindu rites practiced by South Indian-descended Hindus, called *Madrassis* (after their port of original embarkation from India, Madras). It is particularly prominent in Guyana, where it has continually flourished since the days of plantation indenture (see Phillips 1960; Khan 1977; Bassier 1987; Singaravelou 1987, III: 73-83). In Trinidad, however, *Madrassi* religious activity of all sorts was selectively suppressed by white colonial authorities and Hindus themselves: *Madrassis'* ecstatic rites of spirit possession and firewalking were regarded as the most extreme forms of heathenisms by the former, while the latter, increasingly "orthodox" North Indian-descended majority regarded *Madrassis'* rites of blood sacrifice as especially "low" religious modes of practice.

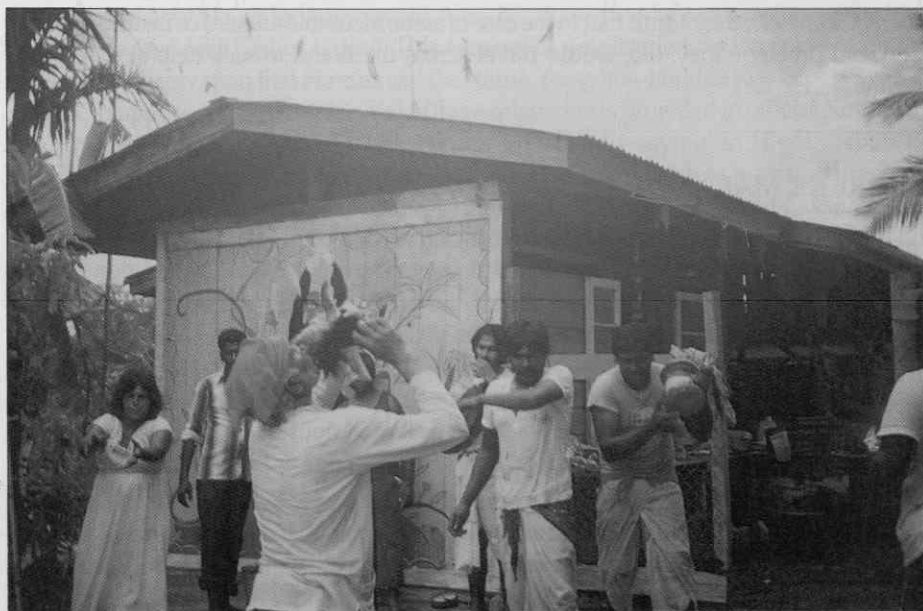
Where *Madrassis* settled individually amongst North Indians, the distinct South Indian styles of Hinduism gave way to the developing mainstream forms. In Surinam, this *Kali*-focussed tradition never existed in any pervasive form mainly because the population lacked South Indians; in Trinidad, it remained only in isolated pockets where *Madrassis* had settled in number. But in Guyana, *Kali Mai puja* became a significant Hindu tradition parallel to the mainstream, Brahman-dominated one (this is especially the case in Demerara, which is home to a large population of South Indian descendants).

In Guyana, *Kali* worship was increasingly standardized in the 1920s and 1930s under the direction of one Kistima Naidoo, then the rites apparently waned in the 1940s and 1950s before undergoing a significant renewal since the 1960s under the influence of *pujari* James Naidoo. There are now estimated to be some one hundred *Kali* "churches" (*koeloes*) throughout Guyana, exhibiting a number of variations from the core set of rites popularized by James Naidoo (Bassier 1987). The *Guyana Maha Kali Religious Organization* is one formal body to have been established to oversee activities within this tradition.

Only in the few places in Trinidad where a large number of Madrassis settled together, did socio-religious activities like *Kali Mai puja* continue in any institutionalized manner. By the end of the 1960s, such practices were quite rare. In the early 1970s, however, two Madrassi Trinidadians (each of whom had family connections in Guyana) independently set up *Kali Mai* centres in the island (one, in the North, the other in the South). Both had been disciples of the most prominent *Kali pujaris* (priests) in Guyana, James Naidoo. These centres now rival each other; their founders are not on good terms. Meanwhile, another centre of *Kali* worship unrelated to either of these men has been founded in Central Trinidad; but this is not quite as popular as the other two, for possession is not as dramatic, nor is blood sacrifice conducted.

Every Sunday, people from all over Trinidad come to the two main centres, seeking help for physical or personal problems (including skin disease, epilepsy, suspected possession, marital disorder, depression). Specific offerings are made at a number of *murtis*, or images of deities. The gods and goddesses represented at Trinidad *Kali Mai* centres include a unique combination of "orthodox" (Sanskritic and Brahmanic) deities, such as *Krishna*, *Hanuman*, *Ganesh* and *Durga*, and Madrassi deities worshipped nowhere else in the island, including *Koteri Mata*, *Sangani*, *Madra Viran*, and *Munishprem*. *Kali Mai* (or *Badra Kali*, her name in an especially fierce form), however is the central focus of worship. *Sangani*, *Madra Viran* and *Munishprem* all demand rum, blood and cigarettes as part of their *prasad*, while Mother *Kali* (*Kali Mai*) takes blood. Blood sacrifice to *Kali Mai* often requires the one she possesses to drink blood directly from the body or head of a decapitated cock or goat.

The ritual sequence includes a series of offerings and songs to various deities,



Med obredom *Kali Mai puja* izvajalec obreda, ki ga je obsedla boginja, pije kri z glave žrtvovane koze. ♦ During *Kali Mai puja*, a ritual practitioner who is possessed by the goddess drinks blood from the head of a sacrificial goat.

climaxing with a rapid succession of cock and/or goat sacrifices (brought as votive offerings by various participants seeking spiritual help). Possession by one or two lesser deities (usually *Koteri Mata* and *Munishprem*) as well as by Mother *Kali* herself ensues, sending one to three regular *pujaris* (of either sex) into altered states of consciousness. The possessed individuals gradually come under control, each subsequently offering direct consultation, exorcism, or hands-on healing - as a deity incarnate - to any and all who wish, waiting their turn while standing in a lengthy queue. Much of the advice supplied by the temporarily present deities concerns devotion to them, fasts, and offerings the supplicant is required to make subsequently at home or on the following Sunday(s) at the centre. The tales of miraculous cure, told by participants, are plentiful.

Kali Mai centres in Trinidad are anomalies: they grew in popularity precisely at the time when a unitary "official" Hinduism was rapidly increasing in intensity and activity. Perhaps these centres represented an outlet for people drawn to ecstatic, personalistic and miraculous forms of religion while other forms of Hinduism were becoming more methodical, collective, and doctrinal. The fact also remains that the period of growing popularity of *Kali Mai puja* was also the time of vast social changes throughout Trinidad: new relationships, new pressures, new anxieties were part of the country's overnight "modernization". The availability of the kind of charismatic religion offered to Hindus by *Kali Mai* centres (as by Christian Pentecostal sects for others) provided the kind of direct, immediate salvation or cure many people desired - with the particular characteristic of being within an accessible Hindu context.

Most village Hindus know of the existence of the *Kali Mai* centres, or perhaps know someone who has been to one. Many Hindus stay well away from such "dark" places; nonetheless, they recognize the effectiveness of the shakti supposed to be present there. Ultimately, they admit that in the case of some incurable ailment or insurmountable personal problem, they, too, would travel across the island to seek help at a *Kali Mai* centre.

SIPARI KE MAI

Sipari ke Mai, most often called simply *Sipari Mai*, embodies a source of spiritual-curative aid in Trinidad much more acceptable to the bulk of Hindus and non-Hindus (see Comins 1893; Niehoff 1960: 153-156; Clarke 1986: 110-111). In the market town of Siparia, an old statue of a black Virgin is found in the Catholic church of *La Divina Pastora*, which was originally established by Spanish Capuchin monks in the 1750s. The exact origin of the statue is a mystery. Spanish Capuchins venerated *La Divina Pastora* - the Virgin Mary as "the Divine Shepherdess" - as well as various black Virgins; it should be noted, however, that *La Divina Pastora*, in Spain, is not one of these black Virgins.

Many folk tales abound about how the statue was found by Arawaks or by indentured Indians, as well as how the statue was known to behave in miraculous ways ("growing" from a small girl each morning to become an old woman by night; leaving the church at night and walking around the countryside). Numerous cures as well as grantings of children to supposedly barren women, have been claims throughout the statue's long history.

Since the days of plantation indenture, Hindus have made pilgrimage to Siparia to



Kip črne Device, ki jo katoličani na Trinidadu častijo kot *La Divina Pastora*, hindujci pa ji darujejo kot boginji *Sipari ke Mai*. ♦ Statue of a black Virgin hailed as *La Divina Pastora* to Catholics in Trinidad, but propitiated as the goddess *Sipari ke Mai* by Hindus.

make offerings at the statue (regarded as a *murti* or image of a Hindu deity, which in fact looks remarkably like an Indian woman). Non-Hindu sources have promulgated the idea that *Sipari Mai*, for Hindus, is *Kali*. This somewhat uninformed notion is based on the superficial observation that Hindus call the statue, these non-Hindus say, "Sipari K. Mai" - the "K." supposedly standing for "Kali" (this explanation is provided in official pamphlets sold by the Catholic church). In fact, Hindus are actually saying, in Hindi, "Sipari ke Mai," or simply "Mother of Siparia." Rather, *Sipari Mai* is a goddess manifestation unto herself, bearing the same rather vague relationship to *Kali* and *Durga* and *Lakshmi* - and to all the other mother goddesses - as does any goddess (just as healing goddesses are considered ultimately to be aspects of one another in India, yet revered as separate, sacred personalities). "She is all of these," says one female Hindu devotee regarding *Sipari Mai* and her relationship to the other *devis*. Following this line of thinking, during one period of *Nav ratri* (see below), it was fascinating to observe that someone had placed a small plastic *murti* of *Lakshmi* beneath the statue in the church, attesting further to the co-recognition of goddesses.

Throughout the year Hindus and others come to Siparia to offer prayers or thanksgivings to *Sipari Mai*, pinning on her long dress a variety of votive offerings (such as small eyes, limbs, babies made from gold). The church remains the sole place where many Hindus will bring their children for their first haircut, seeking blessings and protection for the children by placing the hair (along with rice and money) at the statue's feet. Hindus conduct their offerings and prayers in the church alongside Catholics and Spiritual Baptist (members of a Trinidad-evolved, Afro-Christian tradition).

Each year on the Thursday and Friday before Easter, up to ten thousand Hindus

make pilgrimage to the church, queuing all night and day. It is uncertain why these two days have become institutionalized as the time specifically for Hindus to make pilgrimage here (Catholics and Spiritual Baptists do so the second Sunday after Easter, a date associated with the Feast of *La Divina Pastora*). Some local scholars have suggested that perhaps, since Holy Thursday and Good Friday were major holy days for the predominantly Catholic plantocracy, these were two of the only days each year when Indians were allowed off estates. Another possible contributing factor is that the first *Nav ratri* (a twice-yearly, nine-day period dedicated to the Mother Goddess and her manifestations) of each year takes place around this time (both *Nav ratri* and Easter are astrologically determined, therefore annually co-occurring): therefore, Hindus would be especially involved in goddess worship at this time of year.

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While countless beggars receive alms, and transvestite dancers dance with babies - a mode of blessing unique to Siparia on these days - each person individually files past the statue/*murti*, to offer gifts and to anoint the forehead of the statue of the Virgin/*Sipari Mai*, just as it is done to Hindu images. This period is when most will bring their son or daughter for the first haircut rites; hence, at this time the churchyard is filled with barbers and bawling children. A piece of the clipped hair is offered to the goddess, just as in villages of India. Nearby, streets are lined with stalls selling sweets, produce and religious paraphernalia (appropriate to any of the religions on the island). The undertaking is massive, and the local Catholic priest currently tries his best to accommodate the Hindus in their devotions.

As popular as pilgrimage to *Sipari Mai/La Divina Pastora* is, it is nonetheless regarded by orthodox *Sanatanist* leaders as an aberration. This attitude was expressed in one article in a national newspaper :

"Pundit Seereram Jadoonana, spiritual leader of the the Sanatan Vidwad Vidyalyaya of Penal, said: "The La Divina worship is not related to Hinduism in any way. The Hindus who go to worship the Catholic saint do so out of superstition, not out of an identity with any Hindu goddess." He added: "The Hindus who go to worship the [sic] La Divina in the Siparia R.C. Church are not real devotees of Hinduism." (*Trinidad Express* 5 April 1985, p. 3)

The struggle by some to create or maintain what they consider to be orthodox norms continues. Because *Sipari Mai* worship is informally centred around what can be regarded as a minor (though miraculous) goddess manifestation - but more so, perhaps, because it is conducted without pundits at a Catholic church - it is relegated to a peripheral position in "orthodox" Hindu practice in Trinidad. Likewise is the case with *Kali Mai puja*, since it is closely associated with "low" Madrassi practices, and with *Parmeshwari* sacrifice associated with Chamars. These are popular forms of Hinduism, but ones not integrated into the unitary brand of the religion advocated by Brahmans in a highly institutionalized an organized form of Hinduism in Trinidad. Nonetheless, they are forms which continue to be central to the beliefs and healing techniques of Hindus throughout the Caribbean, just as in their ancestral villages of India.

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HINDUISTIČNI KULTI BOGINJE MATERE NA KARIBSKIH OTOKIH

Steven Vertovec

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Severnoindijsko podeželje je posejano s svetišči in kulturnimi središči, posvečenimi raznim manjšim boginjam materam, ki pa jih verniki dojemajo kot del ene Boginje Matere. Te hrame, ki naj bi imeli posebne zdravilne sposobnosti, vzdržujejo in kulte ohranjajo nebrahmanski verniki, pogosto celo pripadniki nižjih kast. Čeprav njihovi kultu močno odstopajo od brahmanskega hinduizma, vendar ne preseneča, da je takih pojavov v Indiji na pretek. Razširjeni so namreč po prostranih geografskih področjih z velikim deležem prebivalstva iz nižjih kast. Zavedati se moramo tudi, da med hinduisti vlada takorekoč popolna heterogenost obredov. Nebrahmanska svetišča in kulte, posvečene boginji materi, najdemo celo med hinduisti na Karibskih otokih, 150 let po njihovi selitvi tja. Ohranili so se kljub družbenemu in verskemu razvoju, ki je močno načel občutek kastne pripadnosti med priseljenci in kljub temu, da je nad vsem obrednim dogajanjem sčasoma prevladala ena sama, brahmanska tradicija.

Da bi zamenjali afriške sužnje, osvobojene v letih 1834-1838, so na Karibske otoke v okviru programov za pogodbeno delo za določen čas pripeljali množice Indijcev. (Glej Tinker 1974; Clarke, Peach in Vertovec 1990.) V letih od 1938 do 1917 je v takratno Britansko Gvajano prispelo skupaj 238.909 Indijcev, na Trinidad 143.939 (1845-1917) in v Surinam ali Nizozemsko Gvajano 34.304 (1873-1916). Tudi Jamajka, Grenada, Martinique, Guadeloupe in drugi otoki so v drugi polovici devetnajstega stoletja sprejeli manjše število indijskih priseljencev. Večina (okrog 85%) teh priseljencev so bili hinduisti. V Indijo se je pozneje vrnila samo petina do tretjina njih, tako da so predvsem na treh najjužnejših otokih ostale močne indijske oz. hinduistične skupnosti.

V času od njihove selitve na Karibske otoke do danes se je hinduizem - ki v Indiji pozna neverjetno raznolikost regionalnih inačic verovanj, obredov, bogov in tradicij, vezanih na to ali ono kasto - spremenil v pretežno enoten verski sistem (van der Veer in Vertovec 1991, Vertovec 1992, v tisku). Za karibsko-hinduistični verski sistem je značilen omejen, »ortodoksen« nizu verovanj in obrednih postopkov, ki jih strogo nadzorujejo centralizirane brahmanske organizacije, šole in hrami. Vendar zunaj tega »uradnega« niza še vedno opravljajo tudi drugačne hinduistične tradicionalne obrede, predvsem zaradi vere v njihovo učinkovitost, ki jo pripisujejo božjemu posredovanju. Trije kultu boginje matere med hinduisti na Trinidadu, ki jih bom tu opisal, so se skozi rodove ohranjali kot sklopi verovanj in obredov. Čeprav veljajo za obrobne, »neortodoksne« in jih celo javno zaničujejo, so še vedno del vsakdanjega življenja mnogih hinduistov.

HINDUISTIČNA BOGINJA MATI

Večina hinduistov na Trinidadu ima *Durgo* za splošno poosebljenje boginje matere ali za ženski vidik boga. In večina njih tudi neguje meglena verovanja o sorodstvu *Durge* z drugimi boginjami (predvsem z *Lakšmi*, *Sarasvati* in *Kali*). Na bolj specifična vprašanja o teh odnosih posamezniki na koncu vendarle odgovarjajo, da so vse te boginje del ene in iste boginje in nekateri v potrditev tega celo navajajo svete spise ali *Purane*. V bolj konkretnem primeru se je moral duhovnik v lokalni hinduistični šoli na Trinidadu poslužiti *murti* - podobe boginje *Lakšmi*, da bi opravil *pudžo* - obred posvečen boginji *Sarasvati*, ker je nek otrok prinesel napačno podobo. Skomignil je z rameni in nadaljeval z obredom, rekoč: »Ista reč, ista reč.«

Pri molitvi in obredih se verniki vendarle obračajo na vsako boginjo posamezno. Obstajajo tudi molitve, namenjene vsem *devi* (boginjam) skupaj in ponekod omenjajo posvetitve »devetim *devi*« ali »*šakti*« (kozmičnim energijam, ki jih povezujejo z boginjo materjo) ali »devetim *Lakšmi*«. Prepričanje o mnogovrstnih manifestacijah boginj je značilno za spremenljivi in nedoločni značaj laične ideologije v trinidadskem hinduizmu. Čeprav redno spravno darujejo tem kolektivnim *devi*, jih le redki hinduisti na vasi znajo vse imenovati (dva pundita - učenjaka - sta kot prvih devet imenovala: *Bhagvati*, *Bhegla mukhi*, *Bhumavati*, *Čitramasta*, *Bharbhi*, *Tara*, *Hunešvari*, *Vidža* in *Mahakali* ter kot slednjih devet: *Gadža*, *Vira*, *Dhanya*, *Adhi*, *Sathana*, *Vidžaja*, *Aišvarja*, *Dhana* in *Šri Lakšmi Narajan*).

Predvsem *Kali* zaseda zelo dvoumno mesto: včasih jo vidijo bolj kot spremljevalko *Šive* kot vidik *Durge*. *Kali* uživa na Trinidadu nekoliko zlovešč sloves, predvsem zato, ker je povezana s krvavim žrtvovanjem. Vse tri tradicije, ki jih bom tu opisal, povezujejo s *Kali*. Častilci teh kultov sicer pobožno opravljajo obrede, vendar jih imajo mnogi Trinidadčani - tako hinduisti kot drugi - za čudne ali zlovešče prav zaradi njihove povezave z boginjo *Kali*.

PARMEŠVARI

Parmešvari, ki jo povezujejo predvsem s čamarji, t.j. nedotakljivimi, imajo za »sestro« ali manifestacijo boginje *Kali*. Sorodstvo s *Kali* pa je vendar dokaj nedoločeno, kot je to pri večini *šakti* ali konceptov, povezanih z boginjami. Klass (1961: 172-4) v celoti opisuje *Parmešvari* obrede kot obrede, posvečene *Kali*, omenja pa vendar njihovo povezavo z 'drugimi boginjami - »sedmimi sestrami«. Planalp (1956: 166-8), ki je raziskoval v vasi v Uttar Pradeshu, omenja mit, po katerem naj bi *Parmešvari* zgodovinsko bila čamarsko dekle, vdano *Parvati* (spremljevalki *Šive*, t.j. sobivajoči s *Kali* in boginjo materjo), ki je bila pozneje sama proglašena za boginjo. V zelo prostranih predelih severne Indije so jo sčasoma istovetili s čamarji in njihovo posebno obliko čaščenja boginj.

Žrtvovanje boginji *Parmešvari* mora enkrat letno opraviti združenje čamarskih družin, vsaka posamezna čamarska družina pa še posebej ob rojstvu ali poroki sina. Kadar gre za kolektivno inačico žrtvovanja, skupina čamarskih žensk obhodi vse hiše v vasi. Udarjajo na boben, pojejo posebno pesem in nabirajo prispevke za stroške obredov (darovalci - ki so včasih izključno čamarji - so potem vsi deležni boginjine naklonjenosti).

Žrtvovanjski obred boginji *Parmešvari* lahko opravlja katerikoli moški, ki je več obredov. Pri tem mu pomaga eden ali več moških, predvsem zato, da obvladajo težkega

prašiča. Žrtvovanje je treba opraviti na meji med dvema zemljiščema, kar kaže na neortodoksno in domnevno magično moč obreda. Darujejo pa vendar večinoma iste stvari kot pri ortodoksnem obredu, imenovanem *Durga pudža*: *lepsi* (lepljivo kašo) in *sohari* (vrsto kruha), liste rastline *neem* ter *dhar* (tekočo zmes kafre, nageljnovih žbic, trave *doob*, slezovih cvetov, *sindhusa*, žafrana, listov *neema*, sladkega riža in vode). Drugi darovi so lahko čebula, česen, kumina in sol, ki jih imajo za *tamasi* snovi (t.j. iz najnižje skupine treh *gun* ali univerzalnih snovi - kar še bolj poudarja nižji status boginje *Parmešvari* v primerjavi z božanstvi sanskrtskega ali brahmanskega panteona). Darove polagajo na devet listov rastline *paan*, ki predstavljajo »sedeže« raznih sorodnih manifestacij boginje.

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Z namazanim kolom prašiču na hitro prebodejo srce. Zatem vsak udeleženec obreda lahko zlije nekaj *dhara* po glavi mrtve živali in postavi rum in cigarete kot darove pred njeno glavo. Po tradiciji je to trenutek, ko naj bi boginja »obsedla« *pudžari* (duhovnika oz. izvajalca obreda) ali se v njem javila; tako lahko boginja celo neposredno zdravi. To danes ni več sestavni del obreda, vendar častilci še vedno pogosto darujejo in molijo *Parmešvari* predvsem zato, da bi bili sami ali njihovi bližnji deležni ozdravitve. *Lepsi*, *sohari*, svinjino in alkohol pozneje pojedjo in popijejo kot sveto hrano na pojedini, ki se je udeležijo vsi, ki so prispevali, ne glede na to, ali so bili navzoči pri žrtvovanju.

Čprav imajo mnogi hinduisti in nehinduisti tovrstno žrtvovanje boginji *Parmešvari* za zlovesče in pogubno, so sami udeleženci seveda povsem drugačnega mnenja. (A vendar je med takim *Parmešvari* obredom nekdo kazal na bližnje »ortodoksno« hinduistično svetišče, katerega pripadniki so bili vsi prisotni, in dejal, da »ne smemo mešati tega tu in onega tam«.)

Čamarji verjamejo, da je spravno žrtvovanje boginji *Parmešvari* njihova dolžnost, ker jo imajo za posebno boginjo svoje skupnosti, t.j. *kuldevata*. Boginja je sestavni del njihove identitete in porekla. »Tako so delali že naši predniki, « je rekel nekdo o obredih, »in zato tudi mi tako delamo.« Vendar so udeleženci teh obredov danes večinoma srednjih let ali starejši in se pritožujejo, da mladi ne kažejo zanimanja za ohranjanje teh neortodoksnih običajev. Bojijo se, da se bo žrtvovanje boginji *Parmešvari* povsem izgubilo.

KALI MAI PUDŽA

Na Karibskih otokih se je kot najbolj značilen niz hinduističnih obredov ohranil kult *Kali Mai pudža*. Opravljajo jih priseljenci iz južne Indije, imenovani *madrasovci* (po pristanišču Madras, v katerem so se njihovi predniki vkrcali na ladje za karibske otoke). Obred uživa poseben ugled v Gvajani, kjer je cvetel vse od časa pogodbenega dela na plantažah naprej (glej Phillips 1960; Khan 1977; Bassier 1987; Singaravelou 1987, III: 73-83). Na Trinidadu so tako belci (kolonialna oblast) kot sami hinduisti selektivno preganjali vse madraške verske aktivnosti. Njihove ekstatične obrede z duhovno obsedenostjo in hojo po ognju so belci imeli za najbolj skrajne oblike poganstva, hinduisti s severa pa so postajali vse bolj ortodoksni in so na madraške krvave žrtvovanske obrede gledali kot na »vulgarne« oblike verske prakse.

Tam, kjer so se madrasovci naselili posamezno med severnimi Indijci, so se te izrazito južnoindijske oblike hinduizma umaknile razvijajočemu glavnemu toku. V Surinamu ta tradicija, posvečena boginji *Kali* nikoli ni obstajala v neki prodorni obliki, ker pač ni bilo

dovolj južnoindijcev; na Trinidadu se je ohranila samo v manjših izoliranih krajih, kamor so se madrasovci bolj številno naselili. V Gvajani pa je *Kali Mai pudža* postala pomembna hinduistična tradicija ob glavnih, t.j. brahmanskih običajih (to predvsem velja za Demeraro, kjer živijo številni južnoindijci).

V Gvajani se je čaščenje boginje *Kali* vse bolj poenotilo v dvajsetih in tridesetih letih tega stoletja pod vodstvom Kistime Naidooja. V štiridesetih in petdesetih letih so menda že začeli izginjati, dokler niso od šestdesetih let naprej ponovno zaživel pod vplivom *pudžari* Jamesa Naidooja. Ocenjujejo, da je danes po vsej Gvajani okrog 100 cerkva (*koeloo*), posvečenih *Kali*. V njih opravljajo številne inačice tistega jedra obredov, ki ga je razširil James Naidoo (Bassier 1987). Ustanovljena je bila Gvajanska verska organizacija Maha Kali (*The Guyana Maha Kali Religious Organization*) kot formalno telo za nadzor aktivnosti znotraj tradicije.

Samo v tistih redkih krajih na Trinidadu, kamor se je naselilo večje število madrasovcev, se družbeno-verske aktivnosti kot *Kali Mai pudža* ohranjajo v institucionalizirani obliki. Ob koncu šestdesetih let je opravljanje obredov postalo že zelo redko. Na začetku sedemdesetih let pa sta dva madraška Trinidadžana (oba imata sorodnike v Gvajani) neodvisno drug od drugega na otoku ustanovila kulturna središča *Kali Mai* (eno na je severu, drugo na jugu otoka). Oba sta bila učenca nabolj vidnega gvajanskega *pudžari* (duhovnika), Jamesa Naidooja. Središči zdaj tekmujeta med sabo in njuna ustanovitelja nista v dobrih odnosih. Medtem pa so v osrednjem Trinidadu ustanovili še tretje središče, ki ni povezano ne z enim ne z drugim. Vendar ni tako priljubljeno kot prvi dve, ker v njem ni tako dramatične obsedenosti niti ne opravljajo krvavih žrtvovanj.

Vsako nedeljo se ljudje z vsega Trinidada zbirajo v obeh središčih v iskanju pomoči za telesne ali duševne težave (od kožnih bolezni, božjasti, domnevne obsedenosti do zakonskih sporov in depresij). Polagajo posebne darove pred številne *murtije* ali podobe božanstev. Bogovi in boginje, upodobljeni v trinidadskih središčih kulta *Kali Mai*, so edinstvena zmes »ortodoksnih« (sanskritskih in brahmanskih) božanstev, kot so *Krišna*, *Hanuman*, *Ganeša* in *Durga* na eni strani in madraških božanstev, ki jih ne častijo nikjer drugod na otoku, namreč *Koteri Mata*, *Sangani*, *Madra Viran* in *Munišprem*. *Kali Mai* (ali *Badra Kali*, njeno ime v posebno grozeči obliki), je v središču čaščenja. *Sangani*, *Madra Viran* in *Munišprem* zahtevajo za *prasad* darovanje ruma, krvi in cigaret, mati *Kali* (*Kali Mai*) pa izključno kri. Pri žrtvovanju boginji *Kali* mora tisti, ki ga obsede, pogosto piti kri neposredno s telesa ali glave obglavljene petelina ali koze.

Zaporedje obredov vključuje vrsto žrtvovanj in petje raznim božanstvom, vrhunec pa doseže s hitrim zaporednim žrtvovanjem petelinov in/ali koz (pripeljejo jih udeleženci obreda kot votivne darove v iskanju duhovne pomoči). Potem eno ali dve manjši božanstvi (ponavadi *Koteri Mata* in *Munišprema*) ali pa tudi sama mati *Kali* obsede enega do treh *pudžari* (obeh spolov), ki doživljajo spremenjena stanja zavesti. Božanstva postopoma prevzamejo nadzor nad njimi in obsedeni - kot inkarnacije božanstev - ponujajo neposredno svetovanje, izganjanje hudiča, zdravljenje s polaganjem rok vsem, ki to želijo in v dolgih vrstah čakajo. Mnogo nasvetov, ki jih dajejo začasno navzoča božanstva, je povezanih s predanostjo njim, s postom in darovi, ki naj jih prosilec daruje naslednjo nedeljo/naslednje nedelje v svetišču. Udeleženci teh obredov vedo povedati številne zgodbe o čudežnih ozdravitvah.

Središča *Kali Mai* so na Trinidadu posebnost: postala so vse bolj priljubljena prav v času, ko je unitarni »uradni« hinduizem hitro in močno širil svoje aktivnosti. Morda so

pomenila izhod tistim, ki so jih bolj privlačile ekstatične, personalistične in čudežne oblike vere v času, ko so druge oblike hinduizma postale vse bolj metodične, kolektivne in doktrinarne. Dejstvo pa je tudi, da si je *Kali Mai* toliko privrženec pridobil v dobi velikih družbenih sprememb po vsem Trinidadu. Novi odnosi, pritiski in strahovi so bili sestavni del modernizacije, ki se je odvila »čez noč«. S tem, da je bila hinduistom v središčih *Kali Mai* na voljo tako karizmatična vera (drugim so nekaj podobnega nudile krščanske binkoštné sekte) je mnogim pomenilo tisto neposredno odrešenje ali ozdravitev, po kateri so hrepeneli. Posebna prednost kulta pa je bila v tem, da se je vse odvijalo v bolj ali manj sprejemljivem hinduističnem okviru.

Večina hinduistov na podeželju ve za središča *Kali Mai* ali pozna nekoga, ki ga je obiskal. Vendar bodo mnogi naredili širok ovinek okrog teh »mračnih« krajev. Kljub temu priznavajo učinkovitost *šakti*, ki naj bi bile tam navzoče. Konec koncev celo priznavajo, da bi se v primeru neozdravljive bolezni ali nepremostljivih osebnih težav tudi sami odpravili na pot čez otok in iskali pomoč v središču *Kali Mai*.

SIPARI KE MAI

Sipari ke Mai, večinoma jo kličejo kar *Sipari Mai*, pooseblja vir duhovne-zdravilne pomoči, ki je večini hinduistov in drugim na Trinidadu veliko bolj sprejemljiva kot prej omenjena kulta (glej Comins 1893; Niehoff 1960: 153-156; Clarke 1986: 110-111). V mestecu (trgu) Siparia se v katoliški cerkvi *La Divina Pastora*, ki so jo španski kapucini ustanovili v petdesetih letih osemnajstega stoletja, nahaja kip črne Device. Točni izvor kipa je še vedno neznan. Španski kapucini so častili *La Divina Pastora* - Devico Marijo kot »božansko pastirico« - skupaj z drugimi črnimi devicami. Vedeti pa je treba, da *La Divina Pastora* v Španiji ni istovetna z nobeno od teh črnih devic.

Obstajajo številne legende o tem, kako so kip našli Aravaki (avtohtoni Indijanci) ali Indijci na pogodbenem delu in o čudežnem vedenju kipa (ponoči naj bi iz malega dekleta »zrasel« v staro žensko; prav tako naj bi ponoči odhajal iz cerkve in se sprehajal po deželi). V dolgi zgodovini kipa so mu pripisali številne ozdravitve in zanositve domnevno neplodnih žensk.

Od časa pogodbenega dela na plantažah naprej hinduisti romajo v Sipario, da bi darovali kipu (ki ga imajo za *murti* ali podobo hinduističnega božanstva, kip pa je dejansko presenetljivo podoben indijski ženski). Viri izven hinduističnega okolja so razširili misel, da hinduisti istovetijo *Sipari Mai* z boginjo *Kali*. Vendar gre tu za površno znanje in razumevanje, ki izhaja iz tega, da hinduisti kličejo kip, tako vsaj pravijo drugi, »Sipari K. Mai« - in ta »K.« naj bi stal za »Kali«. To pojasnilo širijo razni uradni pamfleti, ki jih prodaja katoliška cerkev. V resnici pa hinduisti pravijo, v hinduščini, »Sipari ke Mai,« ali preprosto »Mati Sipari.« Prej drži, da je *Sipari Mai* sama po sebi božanska manifestacija, ki je v megljenem sorodstvu s *Kali*, *Durgo* in *Lakšmi* - in tudi z vsemi drugimi boginjami materami, kot velja za katerokoli boginjo (podobno menijo v Indiji, da so vse boginje z zdravilnimi sposobnostmi konec koncev različni vidiki ene, vendar vseeno častijo vsako kot posebno, sveto osebnost). »Ona je vse to« pravi neka hinduistična častilka boginje *Sipari Mai* glede njenega sorodstva z drugimi *devi*. Tako je bilo med praznovanjem *Rav natri* (glej spodaj) prav ganljivo, ko je nekdo postavil majhen plastičen *murti* boginje *Lakšmi* h kipu v cerkvi in tako v bistvu potrdil skupno priznavanje boginj.

Hinduisti in drugi vse leto romajo v Sipario, da bi molili h kipu in pripenjali raznoredne votivne darove na njeno dolgo obleko (majhne oči, ude, dojenčka iz zlata). Cerkev v Sipariji je za mnoge hinduiste edini kraj, kamor pripeljejo otroke na prvo striženje las in iščejo blagoslov in zaščito zanje tako, da kipu k nogam polagajo ostrizene lase (skupaj z rižem in denarjem). Hinduisti opravljajo darovanje in molitve v cerkvi ob katoličanih in duhovnih baptistih (članih afro-krščanske sekte, ki se je razvila na Trinidadu).

Vsako leto na veliki četrtek in petek roma kakih deset tisoč hinduistov k cerkvi in pred njo čakajo dan in noč v vrsti. Ni povsem znano, zakaj hinduisti romajo ravno na ta dva dneva (katoličani in duhovni baptisti romajo v cerkev na drugo nedeljo po Veliki noči, na dan, ki je povezan s praznikom svetnice *La Divina Pastora*). Nekateri domači učenjaki menijo, da sta bila veliki četrtek in petek pomembna verska praznika za večinoma katoliške veleposestnike in zato tudi dva od redkih dni, ko je bilo hinduistom dovoljeno, da so odšli s plantaž. Drugačno pojasnilo lahko najdemo v dejstvu, da je prvi Nav ratri (dvakrat letno je *Nav ratri* devetdnevnik, posvečena boginji materi in njenim manifestacijam) vsako leto okrog tega časa (tako *Nav ratri* kot Veliko noč določajo astrološko in vsako leto sovpadata). Zato domnevajo, da so se hinduisti prav v tem času leta posebno posvetili čaščenju boginje.

Medtem ko številni berači dobivajo miloščino in v ženske preoblečeni plesalci plešejo z dojenčki v naročju - to je način blagoslova, ki ga poznajo izključno ta dva dneva v Sipariji - se ljudje vrstijo mimo kipa / *murti*, polagajo darove in Devici *Sipari Mai* mazilijo čelo, tako kot to sicer delajo hinduističnim podobam. V tem času večina ljudi pripelje sina ali hčer na prvo obredno striženje las; dvorišče je polno brivcev in vreščečih otrok. Boginji darujejo koder odstriženih las, tako kot v indijskih vaseh. V bližini cerkve so ceste polne stojnic s sladkarijami, pridelki in verskimi okraski (primernimi za vse religije na otoku). V cerkvi in njeni okolici se drenjajo množice, pristojni katoliški duhovnik pa se zelo trudi, da bi hinduistom olajšal opravljanje obredov.

Čeprav je romanje k *Sipari Mai/La Divina Pastora* še tako priljubljeno, ga imajo ortodoksni *sanatanski* duhovni vodje vendarle za blodnjo. Njihovo mnenje izraža članek v zelo razširjenem časopisu:

»Pundit Seereram Jadoonanana, duhovni vodja penalske Sanatan Vidwad Vidyalye, je dejal: »Čaščenje La Divine Pastore nima nič s hinduizmom. Hinduisti, ki hodijo častit to katoliško svetnico, to delajo iz praznoverja, ne pa zato, ker bi bila istovetna s katerokoli hinduistično boginjo.«

Dodal je : »Hinduisti, ki hodijo častit [sic] La Divino v siparijski rimskokatoliški cerkvi, niso pravi, pobožni hinduisti.« (*Trinidad Express* 5. aprila 1985, str. 3)

Boj, ki ga nekateri vodijo zato, da bi ustvarjali ali ohranili to, kar imajo sami za ortodoksne norme, še vedno traja. Ker se čaščenje *Sipari Mai* odvija okrog manj pomembne (čeprav čudodelne) manifestacije boginje - ali morda prej zaradi tega, ker se dogaja v katoliški cerkvi in brez hinduističnih duhovnikov - jo ortodoksni hinduisti na Trinidadu odrivajo na obrobje. Podobno je s *Kali Maj pudžo*, ker jo istovetijo z »vulgarnimi« madraškimi obredi in z darovanjem *Parmešvari* in nedotakljivimi čamarji. Ti kultu so torej ljudske oblike hinduizma, vendar niso sestavni del tiste unitarne verzije vere, ki jo zagovarjajo brahmani v močno institucionalizirani in organizirani obliki hinduizma na Trinidadu. Kljub temu so osnovnega pomena za verovanja in zdravilne postopke hinduistov po vseh Karibskih otokih, podobno kot v vaseh njihovih prednikov v Indiji.

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Iz angleščine prevedel

Franc Smrke

BESEDA O AVTORJU

Steven Vertovec, dr., antropolog, je raziskovalec na Univerzi v Oxfordu. Je avtor dela *Hindu Trinidad* (1992, Macmillan) in urednik *South Asians Overseas* (1990) in *Aspects of the South Asian Diaspora* (1991, Oxford University Press).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Steven Vertovec is an anthropologist who is currently Research Fellow at Oxford University. He is author of *Hindu Trinidad* (1992, Macmillan) and editor of *South Asians Overseas* (1990, Cambridge University Press) and *Aspects of the South Asian Diaspora* (1991, Oxford University Press).