

Vows in Diasporic Contexts: Hindu Tamils in Germany

by Martin Baumann

Paper presented at the 18th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions in Durban, South Africa; 06. - 11. August 2000 (Panel on "Sacred Promises: Dynamics of Lay Religious Vows")

Introduction

Let me start with two general observations regarding the study of Hindu traditions in regions outside of the Indian sub-continent: In the recent two decades, the topic of overseas or diasporic Hindu communities has taken on in a variety of academic disciplines. An increasing number of studies have been conducted by anthropologists, social scientists and historians of religions, be it on Indian Hindus in South and East Africa, the Caribbean, North America, Europe, Australia and Southeast Asia. In a related way, research has been done on Western convert Hindus, i.e. on westerners who have converted to Hindu-related groups such as the Hare Krishnas, Transcendental Meditation, the Osho Movement and many more groups.

However, compared to this wealth of studies, with the exception of studies on Tamil indentured workers (in Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia), very few research has been carried out on overseas Tamils and their activities to reconstruct a familiar religious-cultural setting in diasporic contexts. Certainly the fact that such Tamil activities and re-organising have come about since the 1980s only, in the wake of the massive flight from Sri Lanka, appears to be a major reason for the dearth of scholarly studies. A second reason for the missing academic attention might be the fact, that the presence of Tamil people in overseas countries is perceived as a sojourning and transitory state only. It is assumed that most Tamils might remigrate to Sri Lanka as soon as the ethnic war has come to an end. However, as Tamil refugee communities in Europe, Canada or Australia now enter their third decade of exile it becomes increasingly observable and clear that most erstwhile refugees will not return but have opted to stay for long in their adopted country of residence. The construction of traditional, purposely built Hindu Tamil temples in these overseas countries can be taken as a straightforward indication that Tamil people intend to root their specific cultural and religious traditions outside of South Asia. My study on Hindu Tamils and their temples in Germany is thus intended to contribute to the recently taken up research on Tamil Hinduism in diasporic settings (see, Taylor 1994, McDowell 1996, Jacobsen 1997, Diesel 1998, Steen Preis 1998, Fuglerud 1999).

Secondly, research on Indian and Tamil overseas communities can take on an important analytical bearing for the study of South Asian culture and society as a whole. Steven Vertovec, having studied Indian Hindus in Trinidad, holds: "The phenomenon of Hinduism in diaspora presents

students of Indian culture and society with unique, almost laboratory-like situations for analyzing the impact of varying conditions on processes of retention and change" (1989: 174). In other words, the confinement of the diasporic situation's locality and time enables an analysis of factors which influence continuities and dynamics of a religious tradition. And, it might be added, the constraints of the diasporic situation might bring to the fore in clearer light patterns and relationships which at times are hard to detect or see in the tradition's country of origin. The insights won thus might provide heuristic clues or ideas to understand better the tradition as a whole. Transferring and applying this aspect to the panel's focus on sacred promises would imply that perhaps the study of vows in diasporic contexts might suggest some further ideas or different perspectives on the dynamics of religious vows carried out in the tradition's mother or home country. This paper hopefully can contribute at least a bit to this.

My perspective on sacred promises and Hindu vows is rooted in my interest as an historian of religions to investigate sociological aspects of a tradition's transplantation and continuation. The settlement of a religious tradition and its re-creation of hitherto known habits and customs, of its formerly taken for granted norms and values in new socio-cultural environments constitutes the main focus of this presentation. With regards to this, the notion of diaspora neatly encompasses the complex of relations and links between the overseas group of people and the country and culture from where this group or its forefathers and -mothers has fled or emigrated (for definitional aspects of "diaspora" and "diasporic" I refer to my article Baumann 2000b).

The main aim of this paper is to examine the topic of vows and the establishment of Hindu temples in diasporic contexts. Following, part 1 shall provide a descriptive sketch of the process of establishing the currently twenty Hindu temples opened by Tamil refugees in Germany during the 1980s and 1990s. The size and activities of the temples differ considerably, and so the opportunity to perform public vows, especially those of severe ascetic practices. Part 2 shall focus on vows performed during festivals at these Tamil Hindu temples. I will restrict my description and interpretation to sacred promises given by men, concentrating on two forms of bodily exhaustive disciplines. As a relative newcomer to this topic, I primarily offer descriptive material on which basis further analytical research might be done.

I. New Homes for Hindu Goddesses and Gods in Germany

Presently, the largest group of Hindu people in Germany is constituted by Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka. The number of Tamils comes up to some 60.000 people. About three fourth of them might be considered Hindus, about 20% Catholics and some 5% Protestants of various denominations. In addition to these about 45.000 Tamil Hindus, also Hindus from India and Afghanistan as well as western converts in Hindu-related groups live in Germany. Indian Hindus, many of them businessmen, doctors or engineers from Kerala, Bengal or Gujarat, have come since the 1950s and might be estimated to some 40.000 people. Despite their number, apart from a small, only once a week opened temple in Frankfurt, no further permanent places of worship have been

founded by the Indian Hindus (see Dech 1998, 2000). Afghan Hindus came to Germany fleeing the civil war during the 1980s. Of the about 66.000 Afghans in Germany, a minority of some 5.000 refugees are Hindus. They maintain a nicely done temple in Cologne, often visited by Sikhs and Indian Hindus too. Finally, western Hindus in groups as the Hare Krishna, Ananda Marga, Transcendental Meditation or the Osho Movement might be estimated to some 7.000-8.000 convert Hindus. They come together in numerous local groups to pursue devotional acts or meditation, no more provoking public debates as had been the case during the 1970s and 1980s (detailed numbers on-line available at Remid 2000).

Tamils from Sri Lanka have come to Germany since the late 1970s. Their number rose significantly in the wake of the escalating civil war in Sri Lanka during the mid-1980s. In 1990, 36.000 Sri Lankan citizens, about 95% of them Tamil people, lived officially registered in Germany. The figure peaked in 1997 with about 60.000 Tamils, dropping since then by a few thousand. Whereas in the beginning mainly young men came, fleeing both persecution by the Sri Lankan army and forced recruitment by the Tamil Tigers, since the late 1980s also women and children succeeded in escaping from terror ridden Northern parts of Sri Lanka. In Germany, there are twice as many men as women, both sexes being comparatively young. The legal status of Tamils in Germany varies according to their date of entrance: Whereas those coming until 1988 had been granted asylum and a right to stay, those arriving since 1989 were able to acquire a status of toleration only, due to a changed jurisdiction. The status of being tolerated has to be renewed every six months. All in all the legal status of about half of the Tamil population is comparatively safe whereas the status of the other half varies between different levels of allowances to stay for a time (see in detail Gottstein et al 1992: 10-12, Baumann 2000a: chapter 4.3).

In line with German policy of distributing asylum seekers all across the country, Tamil refugees were settled in small numbers in a multitude of towns and cities. This policy intended to prevent the formation of ethnic colonies. Such clustering of like national or cultural people is held in certain political circles to hinder integration of the sojourners and migrants. Nevertheless, due to pragmatic reasons such as a less restrictive jurisdiction, the permission to work legally while still being subjected to the asylum proceedings and the fact that relatives lived there already created a numerical concentration of Tamil people in the Ruhr area (situated in the mid-northern part of Germany). It is in this region that a small Tamil infrastructure with shops, cultural and political societies and the founding of Hindu temples has evolved.

Despite their insecure legal status, Tamils have started to open small places of worship with permanently installed deities since the late 1980s. Both the sharp increase of the number of refugees and the arrival of women and children plays an important part. In addition, those Tamils, having lived for several years in Germany by then, had acquired financial resources and administrative skills to get a temple functioning. Whereas in 1989 only four small temples, situated in poor basement rooms existed, in 1994 the number had climbed up to ten temples. And again, five years later, in 1999, the number of temples had doubled, currently coming up to 20 Tamil

Hindu temples. The map done in Baumann 2000a, p. 132, gives the distribution of temples in Germany. Half of the temples are situated in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, with its industrial heart of the Ruhr valley.

The size of the temples varies according to the rooms available and to the financial support obtainable. Some temples are more or less hidden in small cellars. Others are set up on the ground floor of a residential house while a few temples are arranged in spacious halls of converted industrial buildings. So far no purposely, newly built temple exists, although in Hamm/Westphalia the construction of a traditional, South Indian styled temple with a huge *gopuram* (entrance portal) is on its way.

Services at these temples vary accordingly: Whereas small temples offer once a week the puja, usually on Friday evening, bigger and financially better off temples are able to have the regular rituals to take care of the deities and to adorn them twice a day. As for the deities which Tamil Hindus have installed we find Shiva's sons Ganesha (known also as Vinayagar, Pillayar or Ganapathy) and Murugan (also as Subrahmanya, Kumara or Skanda), six times each as a temple's main deity, Shiva (once only) and goddesses such as Durga, Muthumariamman, Minakshi and Kamadchi. If space permits, a variety of deities in separate shrines reside and additionally a shrine for the nine planets (*navagraha*) is set up.

A central board or organisation to bring together the various officiating priests and brahmans and the temple committees does not exist. On the one hand competition for prestigious status and influence has prevented any organisational platform or unified representation so far. On the other hand, divergent attitudes exist with regard to the issue whether a close preservation of rituals or, in contrast, adopted and abbreviated ceremonies should be carried through in the temple.

Apart from the on-going process of founding additional places of worship, since the mid-1990s a related development came to the fore: Temple committees had been eager to move their temples from the initial poor and secluded basement rooms to more spacious and representative halls. Formerly small and unnoticeable places of worship changed to well arranged temples with splendidly decorated shrines. The enlargement of the temples and the founding of new sacred places can be interpreted as a consolidation and stabilisation of the Tamil Hindu presence in Germany. The uncertainty and unresolved existence during the 1980s has changed to a growing familiarity with the unknown surrounding and an intention to build a 'new' home away from home. Religion appears to play a vital role in this process of maintaining one's identity and difference on the one hand and of integrating in the new society on the other. Despite the expansion of places of worship, in general the temples are hardly known and noticed by the public. With one exception, the places of worship are not identifiable as temples by their outer design or architecture.

Nevertheless, a move into the public and a growing recognition by the neighbourhood and local authorities occurred as temples started to carry out processions during their annual temple festivals. It was at these ten or fourteen days lasting festivities that, for the first time, Tamil Hindu religiosity and devotional acts became visible and apparent to the wider, non-Tamil population. The first

public procession, the deity's circumambulation of the temple along the surrounding streets, was carried out at the Sri Kamadchi Ampal temple in Hamm/Westphalia in 1993. Whereas this first procession was attended by some 300 visitors, the number grew to some 4.000 people three years later. And, in 1999 and 2000, each time the festival attracted some 10.000 Tamils, coming to Hamm from all over Germany and far away places as France, Switzerland and Denmark. Similar processions, on a much smaller scale with a few hundred devotees, have been carried out in a few other places only (in Hannover and Gummersbach). Undoubtedly, the festival in Hamm is the biggest Hindu event in Germany and its organizer, the Sri Kamadchi Ampal temple, is the best known temple amongst Tamils living in Germany. And it is here, where vows are fulfilled and religious disciplines are carried out in public during the procession.

II. Hindu Vows in Diasporic Context

In the following, I will focus on the description and interpretation of two forms of vows practised by male devotees during the annual festival honouring the goddess Sri Kamadchi. As mentioned before, the Sri Kamadchi temple is the most prominent Hindu temple in Germany. The priest Siva Paskarakurukkal established the temple as one of the first places of worship in 1989, initially in a small cellar. In the following years, Tamils donated generously and in 1992, the temple opened in the spacious rooms of an adjacent former laundry. The temple grew steadily. In 1996 it encompassed various rooms for the deities, the *navagraha* and personnel.

However, the place was situated in a residential area, surrounded by apartment blocks and private gardens. As the attendance at the annual festival procession increased rapidly, anger and hostility amongst a few neighbours arose as well. They complained about blocked garage entrances and lamented litter lying in the frontgardens. Because the temple in no way matched German regulations of fire prevention and security standards, by order of the municipality the temple had to close. In a very cooperative way, however, the municipally authorities of Hamm helped to find a new place and a year later the temple re-opened at its new place in an industrial area in the outskirts of Hamm. There, Sri Kamadchi and her entourage were re-installed in a newly built, pragmatically arranged house. Plans quickly developed to erect a spacious temple hall with a high rising tower (*gopuram*). Although the new place is hard to reach by public transport as it is located far outside of Hamm it does provide plenty of space to carry out the well-attended festival and procession. The temple itself is a branch temple of the famous Kamakshi temple in Kancipuram (South India), its main priest, Siva Paskarakurukkal, having been a *brahmacari* (monk) at Kamakoti.

It should not go unmentioned that the success of the temple, compared to temples in neighbouring cities, is due to the role and capabilities of this main, Dravidian priest. In contrast to most other temples, Sri Paskaran is both the main servant of the adorned goddess and the manager of the temple. Although officially a temple committee exists, it is him, the *kurukkal* (temple priest) who does the organisational work and decides what is to be done. At most other temples a clear

division of duties pervades, the priest being responsible for the religious sphere whereas the committee takes care of the management work. Although at the Sri Kamadchi temple unavoidably a severe concentration of responsibility and power in one hand exists, the temple and priest have gained a positive reputation of punctuality and getting things done and going. The steady growth of the temple, in terms of size, attendance at the festival and fame among the Tamil refugees, is interpreted by Hindus that Kamadchi clearly has bestowed her grace on the temple and that her *Shakti* (Skt. power) resides in the central *murti* (Skt. deity's statue, Tam. *murtti*).

Having explained somewhat at length the situation in which Hindu devotional acts take place in Germany, let us now turn to sacred promises or vows (Tam. *nertti*) and their fulfillment (Tam. *nertikkatan*). I am not concerned with vow fulfillments such as weekly or monthly fasts pursued by women or to other non-public fulfillments of promises. Rather, my focus shall be two public practices of vow fulfillment, that of rolling one's body around the temple and that of being pierced by needles and hooks. Here, the body acts as a domain of expressing devotion as the body is subjected to severe pain and exhaustion. Both kinds of acts can be observed at the annual temple festival of the Sri Kamadchi temple in Hamm, forming spectacular parts of the main procession.

The first and important fact to notice is that these harsh devotional acts are performed at all. Although two or three other temples in Germany carry out public processions, such painful exercises of devotees are no part of the deity's circumambulation of the temple. So far, only at one other temple, at the Sithivinayagar temple (Ganesha temple), also located in Hamm/Westphalia, year for the first time seven men performed the rolling of their body.

The first time the rolling body circumambulation (Tam. *ankappiratitta*) was performed in Germany was in 1994. It took place at the annual festival of the Sri Kamadchi temple, celebrated for the second time with a public procession. The devotional act at this and the following processions involves lying flat on the street and rolling one's body clockwise along the streets surrounding the temple. The rolling vow fulfillers form a part of the procession. They follow the splendidly decorated procession cart of Kamadchi, the cart itself followed directly by the statue of Candeshvara (carried on a palanquin by four men). The line of rollers is followed by women kneeling down every few steps, this exercise being a public form of vow fulfillment as well. A band of some 100 girls and women, untiringly singing devotional hymns, comes behind these female and male vow fulfillers.

The rolling men have to manage a distance of about 1.000 meters. In contrast to Sri Lanka or South India, in Germany, due to the colder weather even in May, the ground usually is cold and often wet. Also, as the procession leads along streets, the men have to cope with rolling on solid hard tar and numerous small stones press in their skin. The shoulders, hips and knees suffer in particular, as these carry the weight while rolling one's body. After a few hundred meters, the exhaustion and pain is literally written in the faces and eyes of the rollers. In a few cases rollers vomit and have severe difficulties to carry on. However, encouraging calls of "*arokara*" by the numerous supporters and spectators and the will to fulfill the vow keep the rollers going.

The first time I observed the spectacle of rolling vow fulfillers was in 1996, in Hamm. Some 15 men rolled in rainy weather, their body being dirty all over. As I had been introduced to the temple and its priest by a couple of German supporters, living nearby the temple, I asked them about this strange action. The husband explained to me that the rollers atone for sins having done during the last year. And, as he held: "Some of these rascals certainly would deserve a second round to be done". Be that as it may, in the course of time and asking some rollers myself, I learned more about the reasons and motives to pursue this painful, physically demanding action. And most important, I came across the concept of sacred promises and that the rolling is more than just a method to cleanse oneself from wrong deeds. Some indeed roll to purify themselves from immoral action and misconduct done during the past year. "It is like your confession in church", a 22 year old man explained to me, comparing Hindu and Catholic methods to wipe out sinful deeds. Some rollers pursued the ordeal to underscore their respect and commitment to the goddess. Another one had taken on the action to thank the goddess for curing a relative, while a third one rolled the distance to beg for the cure of a seriously ill family member. Both rationales are expressed by the rollers, that of fulfilling the given vow to roll around the temple after the wish had been granted and that of taking on the demanding action in order to bring a wish to fruition. At times, motives to roll can be very pragmatic and this-wordly: a man had taken on the exercise in order to beg for an official approval to stay in Germany; and, as I was told, six months later the permit was granted to him. Finally, I was also told that the demanding action is taken on for the roller himself, "because it calms down my mind and mood", as was explained to me. As it appears, the spectrum of stated reasons to roll enlarges, the more practitioners are asked. In general, the motives most often stated have been the expression of thanks and respect to the goddess and the query for the fulfillment of a request or wish.

The second demanding discipline involves men being pierced by needles through the cheeks and having hooks inserted in one's neck and back. Being thus pierced the men take elaborately decorated wooden arches on their shoulders, the thus called *kavadi* arches (Tam. *kavati*). As *kavadi* dancers they walk before the procession, accompanied by a group of drummers and *nataswaram* players. Responding to the demanding rhythm of the music, the men dance in wheeling, at times whirling movements, attracting the attention of all visitors and cameras.

The gloriously colourful *kavadi* dancers have been a part of the procession since its inception in 1993. Carrying a *kavadi* arch on one's shoulders and dancing to the sound of the music constitutes a fulfillment of a vow. The weight of the arch and the strain of the wheeling dance are physically quite demanding. However, being additionally pierced by hooks and needles did not occur until last year (1999) for the first time.

Did the practice of rolling one's body all along the procession's distance arouse the curiosity of most German observers, so did even more the practice of being pierced through the skin. So far, in Germany this practice has been carried out only as part of the festival celebrated at the Sri Kamadchi temple. Let me elaborate in a few words how the piercing is done: About two hours

before the procession starts, the young men to be pierced assemble outside the temple in front of the shrine of Saturn (Shani). This place for carrying out the piercing might have been for simple pragmatic reasons, for this place forms a kind of inner yard at the Sri Kamadchi temple. First, the needle is stuck through the cheeks. A man takes the needle, symbolising Murugan's lance (the *vel*, Tam.), and pricks it through the left cheek. As the needle has arrived in the mid of the mouth, a kind of silver piece, stretching out of the mouth, is secured to the needle. Then, the piercer drills the needle through the right cheek and puts an arrowhead, like on the left side, on the needle's end. During this procedure the man is expected to show no signs of pain or emotion. Following, the man turns round, sits down and the fixing of the hooks begins. The piercer inserts the hooks in two parallel folds in the back skin running along the shoulder blades. Some five to seven little hooks are run through the skin. Once the piercer has set the last hook, small ropes are attached to the hooks. The small ropes are tied into a knot, and a longer, firm rope is attached. Later, during the procession and while dancing, a second man will hold the rope's end, forming a pair of two dancers.

Having asked the young men about the pain it was explained to me that it does not really hurt. "The pricking is like acupuncture" I was told. Be that as it may, relatives and spectators watched with much respect, anxiety and excitement the actual carrying through.

As said, this form of harsh devotional act took place for the first time in 1999. At this time, four men had been pierced among the twelve kavadi dancers. A year later, in 2000, some ten of the more than twenty kavadi dancers had their cheeks pierced through by Murugan's lance. Indubitably, we can observe an increase of this form of devotional act. Similarly, however, also a decrease in form of the act's carrying out took place: While in 1999 one of the pierced men had four thick, strong hooks inserted in his back skin, the sight looking really cruel, in 2000 the hooks seem to have been reduced to a moderate size. Apparently it appears that the performance of the devotional act should not look cruel or repulsive.

As with the vow fulfillers rolling their body around the temple, being pierced and dancing with the kavadi arch is a form of fulfilling a sacred promise. The dancers are expected to have fasted for ten days, taking one meal a day only and preparing for the procession. Reasons and motives seem to be more or less similar as explained for the rollers. The devotees perform the demanding activity for the goddess in return for a boon either requested or granted. However, although this explanation is convincing and in line with established research on vow fulfillment, there are also some puzzling issues. I was told that some of the pierced men in the morning decided to perform the activity spontaneously, thus not preparing for this act since days. Rather, a reason to take on the ordeal might have been the excitement, and possibly the prestige, to be amongst these brave and gazed at performers. Secondly, I asked several men after the procession and after they had taken off the needles and hooks, "Why do you do this?". Perhaps my question was too straightforward or impolite, but several times I did not receive an answer at all. Instead, they smiled at me only. Or they explained in general terms that this exercise is a part of the Hindu faith. I got

the feeling that an inquiry for a "Why?" simply is not a question to be addressed, because for someone who knows the tradition it is self-explanatory. Perhaps this might provide an answer to my question that at no time a previously pierced man explained to me that a vow was fulfilled. At least, I did not receive explicitly an explanation that they had fulfilled a vow.

Conclusion

One of the most interesting facts about the performances of these demanding bodily activities is that they are carried out at all in the diasporic context of Germany. Until recently, the Tamil Hindus had very few opportunities to fulfill the specific vow of rolling around a temple or getting pierced by Murugan's lance. I suspect, presupposing the pragmatism of many Hindu and Tamil people that instead other vows have been given, be it to generously donate for the opening or enlargement of a temple; or to finance an *abhishekam* (bathing or besprinkling ritual in the temple); or to bear the expenses of a festival day or many other possibilities (see Pfaffenberg 1982: 172-178, Collins 1997). The full range of established forms to request a boon or to thank for its receipt seems no necessity to secure the continuation of this transplanted tradition. Rather, a flexible and pragmatic approach enables the Hindus to cope with their new situation and its restrictions as best as possible.

In the course of time, as Tamil refugees succeeded to recreate known social, cultural and religious customs in the new environment, also the opportunities to choose among the vow activities available expanded. As my examples show, during the recent years both the number of rollers increased and the austerities of a kavadi dancer intensified. An increasing number of men have chosen to fulfill a vow by performing these bodily painful and demanding actions. However, the new socio-cultural context sets limits to the methods esteemed appropriate and feasible. In general, most Western Europeans hold that religious practices should be moderate, disciplined and carried out in ways not harming one's body. According to most of them, fierce and bodily hurting exercises are valued as barbarous, raw, archaic and reminiscent of religious practices performed during the middle ages or earlier. I strongly doubt that within the next years we will observe in Germany or generally in Europe sceneries as documented by Elizabeth Fuller Collins, describing how Tamil devotees in Malaysia got pierced by enormous spears and skewers (Collins 1997: 4-5). The main priest's intent and that of many established Tamils in Germany, to present the festival and procession as a peaceful, enjoyable gathering and as a colourful addition to the region's ethnic multiplicity will restrict more severe forms, I strongly suspect. Taking this point in a general perspective, the emergence of such painful religious practices in a context which has got used to rather moderate, bodily non-demanding religious practices provides a mirror to also learn more about the prevalent patterns and attitudes of the diasporic context itself.

Finally, also in contrast to the case of Malaysia, where the body piercing is performed by low-caste devotees, in Germany, due to the very different history of Tamils having come to Europe, mainly middle and upper caste devotees perform the harsh vow fulfillment exercises. It is them who

perform these demanding disciplines, although, if directly questioned about caste, for Tamils the term and issue seems out of place and non-existent. Apparently, caste, like the issue of the Tamil Tigers, is a topic not touched upon and best to be avoided. The increasing take up of this bodily harsh practice can be interpreted as a desired completion of one's religious-cultural tradition. As Tamils manage to re-create other customs and known patterns in the new environment, likewise the spectrum of devotional expressions gets enlarged. Most young Tamils, having grown up in Germany, had not come across such demanding practices and it was at the temples that for the first time they encountered these disciplines. In this way, the practice of vow fulfillment not only carries an impact for the very individual, but acquires a heightened importance for the tradition as a whole. The practices consolidate the continuation of the transplanted tradition, socializes growing up members in the particular aspects of the tradition and by way of its harshness and demanding character takes on the stamp of authenticity. In the diasporic context, the mutual impact of tradition and individual performance crystallizes and becomes apparent again, a relationship possibly well worth to look at in the used South Asian context as well.

Acknowledgement: I am most grateful to Rohit Barot (University of Bristol, U.K.) for insightful observations and comments on the draft and for corrections of the English.

Copyright by Martin Baumann; this paper will appear in the forthcoming volume by William Harman, Selva Raj (eds.), *Dealing with Deities - The Vow in South Asian Religions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Works Cited

Baumann, Martin, 2000a, *Migration, Religion, Integration. Vietnamesische Buddhisten und tamilische Hindus in Deutschland*, Marburg: Diagonal.

Baumann, Martin, 2000b, "Diaspora: Genealogies of Semantics and Transcultural Comparison", in: *Numen*, 47 (3): 313-337.

Collins, Elizabeth Fuller, 1997, *Pierced by Murugan's Lance. Ritual, Power, and Moral Redemption Among Malaysian Hindus*, Northern Illinois: University Press.

Dech, Matthias, 1998, *Hindus und Hindutum in Deutschland. Exemplarische Untersuchung anhand der Situation in Frankfurt a.M.*, Dissertation, Marburg (on microfiche).

Dech, Matthias, 2000, "Vishwa Hindu Parishad" and "Rhein Main Bengali Cultural Association", in: *Handbuch der Religionen*, edited by Michael Klöcker and Udo Tworuschka, Landsberg: Olzog Publ., chapters VIII-17 and VIII-18.

Diesel, Alleyn, 1998, "The Empowering Image of the Divine Mother: A South African Hindu Woman Worshipping the Goddess", in: *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 13 (1): 73-90

Fuglerud, Ivind; Fuglerud, Oivind, 1999, *Life on the Outside: The Tamil Diaspora and Long-Distance Nationalism*, London: Pluto Press.

Gottstein, Margit and Franz-Helmut Richter, Catherine Ruet, Gabriele Thoß, 1992, "Tamilen aus Sri Lanka in Deutschland", in: Berliner Institut für Vergleichende Sozialforschung (ed.), *Ethnische Minderheiten in Deutschland*, Berlin: Edition Parabolis, part 3.2.3, 1-14.

Jacobsen, Knut A., 1997, "Hinduismen i diaspora: Religios endring og norsk kontekst", in: *Kirke og Kultur* (Oslo), 4-5, 441-452.

McDowell, Christopher, 1996, *A Tamil Asylum Diaspora. Sri Lankan Migration, Settlement and Politics in Switzerland*, Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, Vol 1, Oxford, Providence, RI: Bergham Books.

Pfaffenberger, Bryan, 1982, *Caste in Tamil Culture. The Religious Foundations of Sudra Domination in Tamil Sri Lanka*, Syracuse, New York: Foreign and Comparative Studies.

Remid, 2000, *Religionsgemeinschaften in Deutschland: Mitgliederzahlen* (April 2000), on-line, URL: http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~religion/remid_info_zahlen.htm

Steen Preis, Ann-Belinda, 1997, "Seeking Place. Capsized Identities and Contracted Belonging among Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees", in: Karen Fog Olwig, Kirsten Hastrup (eds.), *Siting Culture. The Shifting Anthropological Object*, London, New York: Routledge, 86-100.

Taylor, Donald, 1994, "The Symbolic Construction of the Sri Lankan Hindu Tamil Community in Britain", unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, London.

Vertovec, Steven, 1989, "Hinduism in Diaspora: The Transformation of Tradition in Trinidad." in: Günther D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (eds.), *Hinduism Reconsidered*, New Delhi: Manohar, 152-179.