ENTERTAINING SUBALTERNITY:

THE PERFORMANCE OF NATION AND THE POLITICS OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE

by

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ABSTRACT

The critical gaze of Victorian morality and colonial bureaucracy affected many of India's cultural and artistic practices, including dance. As a result, reconstructing 'lost' art forms and invoking the 'real' traditions of pre-colonial India were central to nationalist movements rallying for political independence. However, in reconstructing the dance, elite artists largely ignored the lives of the actual women who practiced it. This contradictory appeal to a sanitised 'glorious past' has had significant impact on historical and contemporary representations of Indian dancers. This thesis examines questions of nationalism, citizenship, gender, subjectivity and power through a study of Indian classical dance to interrogate the tradition/modernity binary vital to colonialism and subsequently multiculturalism. I argue that the interconnected ways in which dancers were/are imagined through colonial, nationalist and contemporary multicultural discourses have shaped race and gender relations alongside notions of national belonging in the larger and related contexts of postcolonialism and multiculturalism.

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Sitting in the theatre, the audience will know the performance is about to begin from the faint *chum-chum* of the dancer's bells as she arrives backstage. The dancer's first introduction to the audience, this gentle sound signals her presence even though she has not yet been seen. As such, the smooth rhythmic sound creates a sense of mystery, intrigue and perhaps even exoticism. Before the house lights are dimmed or the curtains drawn, the audience comes to know the dancer; the nuances particular to her interaction with the music, the specific characteristics of her personality and dance, these are secondary to the image of the dancer conjured in those first few seconds. So begins the encounter between performer and audience, between the individual and the representation. As the performance unfolds, the audience and dancer come to know one another more intimately and the uniqueness of the performance begins to emerge. Yet even this remains shaped by the initial encounter, by all that has accompanied the performer and audience to the theatre, by the images that have preceded them. In order to understand this encounter, these various accompaniments must also be considered. The performance is not just a performance but a meeting of different times, places, identities and traditions. Shaped by a long history and an exoticisation of its culture, Indian classical dance is as complicated as the subjectivities of its performers and observers.

British colonialism left many of India's dance styles degraded, eclipsed under the critical gaze of Victorian morality and bureaucracy. At the same time that nationalist movements were rallying for independence, elite scholars and artists began the reconstruction of "lost" art forms invoking the 'pure' traditions of pre-colonial India (Bakhle, 2005; Citaristi, 2001; Roy, 1994). Although its reclamation as an 'ancient' spiritual and artistic tradition can certainly be defined as a form of resistance to the

colonial regime that defined it as promiscuous and vulgar, the dance's reconstruction as a form of 'high' art has helped maintain – however inadvertently – specific relations of class, caste, religion and gender. As it sought recognition, this nationalist reclamation of the dance, a sanitizing appeal to a glorious 'past', largely ignored the lives of the actual women who practiced it. Ironically, as the dance was elevated to a 'classical' art, those who had preserved its remnants were once again stigmatized and subordinated. Visibly gendered, religiously marked and increasingly elitist, the classical dancer espoused in the nationalist project speaks volumes about the ways in which independent India viewed (and views) itself and its nationals. This dancer further complicates representations of India and its culture abroad.

A critical analysis of the historical relationship between Indian classical dance and the Indian nationalist movement is not only important for the postcolonial context of the subcontinent. Such a study also has implications for contemporary performances of the dance in the interrelated contexts of transnationalism, multiculturalism and the diaspora. As a result, the aim of this work is to understand the productive function of Indian classical dance in creating various subjects and their stratified access to ideas of national belonging in these various contexts. The history of this art form brings together a host of actors – marginalised subalterns, nationalist elites, colonial officials and contemporary multiculturalists. The following chapters explore these multiple players and the subjectivities they claim as they inhabit various spatialities and temporalities. While numerous studies have described the 'invention' of various traditions and problematised the reification of cultures in the contexts of colonialism or multiculturalism, they have not explored the connections that lie between colonialism and

multiculturalism. That is to say, attention is rarely brought to what the problematisation of a tradition in one location might mean for the other. In order to understand the contemporary ossification of culture in a multicultural setting, it is imperative that the colonial histories of all those involved be addressed. A web therefore emerges that connects the colonisers and colonised of the past with the multiculturalists and 'ethnic minorities' of the present. My study of Indian classical dance brings together the complexity of and interrelation between these various sites and subjectivities by complicating the artificial binary between tradition and modernity and exposing the exclusionary function that it supports. This perspective reads Indian classical dance as a metonym for the postcolonial condition for it overlaps with questions of nationalism, tradition, identity, time and space.

Entertaining Subalternity is as much about challenging the audience to move beyond exoticised notions of a static tradition – and thus find entertainment through their categorisation of the Other - as it is about encouraging dancers to refuse the invitation to perform themselves as the exotic Other temporarily inhabiting (entertaining) a subaltern position. In order to achieve this aim, close attention must be given to a variety of political, theoretical and ethical issues. Maintaining the contrapuntal relationship between colony and metropole, homeland and diaspora, past and present, this project also insists that the interlocking factors of race, class and gender remain always in sight. All three have played pivotal roles in colonialism, nationalism and multiculturalism and continue to demand attention.

I begin with a theoretical overview to introduce the various concepts from which this study draws. Foremost is a consideration of the tradition/modernity binary and how

this has facilitated the exclusion of particular subjectivities while still upholding the promises of universal liberalism. This binary distinction was crucial in justifying colonial rule and is still manifest in contemporary discussions on cultural commensurability. It is important to note that this binary has also been adopted by various nationalists and diasporics in order to articulate their own experiences. Branching from this discussion of tradition and modernity, the interlocking issues of race, class and gender are also brought to the fore through an analysis of the production of sexuality, which is as integral to the dance as is spirituality. This chapter maintains the necessity of understanding both the larger political context *and* the more individual practice of subject formation for the two are intertwined. Beginning with an exploration of the exclusions of liberal theory and ending with the formation of identities, this theoretical introduction lays the ground for a contrapuntal study of different times, spaces and the similarities they share.

Chapter Two takes a closer look at the anti-colonial nationalist movement in India in order to ground the reconstruction of the dance. This chapter traces the colonial cartography of India and how this was both internalised and resisted by Indian nationalists through the image of *Bharata Mata* or Mother India. The figure of *Bharata Mata* presented a nation that could be simultaneously experienced as indigenous, maternal and sacred. This analysis is used to contextualise the Indian classical dance practice of the *bhumi pranam*, one of the ways in which the ritual sacralisation of space is made apparent in this art form. Although the *bhumi pranam* is considered to be a prime example of the dance's characteristic spirituality, I argue instead that it is as much a result of the production of Indian national space as it is an agent of its reproduction. To

understand the *bhumi pranam* thus requires a deeper exploration of Indian national space itself. It also signals to the tight bond between the dance and the Indian nation.

Having examined the spatial context of the Indian nationalist movement and its implications for the dance, Chapter Three explores the reconstruction and purification of Indian classical dance by examining its juxtaposition against the figure of the *devadasi*. A controversial figure, the *devadasi* has been both revered and disdained. European responses towards 'dancing girls' were varied; while some were enamoured and full of praise for their beauty and skill – "their bronze tint" proclaimed to be "more agreeable to the human eye than the fair skins of Europe (cited in Nevile, 45)" - others expressed contempt and held them in ridicule (Vijaisri, 134). Many colonial officers participated in *nautch* performances, initially facilitated by the "native rulers and elite for whom they signified the sensual and artistic image of the exotic east (ibid)." Although partially responsible for bringing the *devadasi* out of the temple, many Indians saw her as a sign of cultural degradation and immorality (a fact attributed in part to her leaving the temple). These Indians were the ones to spearhead the anti-*nautch* movement of the nineteenth century. Chapter Three examines the complex figure of the *devadasi* and the multiple perceptions of her to argue that she has been produced as a fetish object. Reclaiming the dance from the *devadasi,* artists and scholars have overlooked her particular subjectivity and denied her access to national belonging. The reconstruction of the dance and the corresponding perceptions of the *devadasi* demonstrate a contrapuntal relationship between colony and metropole for the *devadasi* has similarly been fetishised in Europe, even if for different reasons. Deconstructing the figure of the *devadasi* therefore reveals

the ways in which Indian *and* European subjectivities have historically been produced through and against the dance.

Recognising the ways in which the *devadasi* has historically been fetishised in Indian and European imaginaries is important to understanding the location of both Indian classical dance and culture in a multicultural setting. Chapter Four looks at representations of 'ethnic' cultures in the multicultural context in order to examine what room is left for Indian classical dance in such a society. Regarded as an 'ethnic' art, Indian classical dance is not seen as separable from other (misrepresented) aspects of South Asian culture within the structure of multiculturalism; rather than solely view it as a form of art, multiculturalism perceives the dance as a form of cultural expression. As a result, the dance is overdetermined to represent many 'characteristics' of Indian culture, a fact that is problematic given the dance's complex social and political history. Chapter Four attends to this history by examining the colonial judiciary system in India and how this cemented ideas of a coherent and therefore static Indian 'spirituality' and 'culture' Using the example of *sati*, this chapter problematises cultural representations by exposing the ways in which law, religion and custom have been conflated to represent coherent ideas of Indian tradition – ideas that are still in circulation in contemporary multicultural discourse. The issues revealed in the debate on sati are seen to be congruent to and supporting of the same project that currently essentialises 'ethnic' cultures and arts. The *sati* is therefore as important a figure as the *devadasi* in deconstructing simplistic ideas of culture that posit particular groups as incommensurate with the mainstream. That cultural commensurability and the tradition/modernity binary upon which it rests is a concern in multicultural societies suggests a strong relationship between colonial logic and

multicultural discourse. This final chapter explores this relationship and its implications for racial/cultural belonging, gender constructions and class consciousness. Through this analysis of Indian classical dance, it appears that this art form may be as productive of the multicultural subject as it is the Indian and European ones.

In addition to the artificial split of tradition and modernity, the following chapters also deal with questions of spirituality, identity and tradition. While other cultural practices have been studied from a similar perspective, the focus of these studies on the tradition/modernity binary have been limited in that they do not connect to wider political issues of race, class and gender. Thus an explorartion of the nationalist 'invention' of the tradition of Indian classical music as explored by Janaki Bakhle does not address the gendered processes that this entailed. Similarly, Katherine Pratt Ewing's analysis of modernity as it relates to the postcolonial subjectivities of Muslim *pirs* in Pakistan does not grasp the full force of the racialisation that was inherent in the colonial project and, as a result, persists in this era of 'postcolonialism.' My project offers an attempt to juggle a host of issues that are too often approached independent of each other. While the specific chapters that follow deal with seemingly different topics, I maintain that it is only in giving attention to these various sites that their relationships to each other can be fully appreciated. While the chapters have been organised in the above mentioned manner, it is not necessary that they draw a strict linear trajectory. It is, for example, possible that the fetishism analysed in Chapter Three can lead to a different appreciation of *Bharata Mata* discussed in Chapter Two. Similarly, the connections between colonial codification and multicultural representation offered in Chapter Four might further explain the process of fetishisation explored in Chapter Three or the work that is required to create a sense of

national belonging addressed in Chapter One. This is what complicates a contrapuntal analysis; it is also what makes it resonate so widely.

According to D. Soyini Madison, "Alain Locke, the first black Rhodes Scholar and foremost critic and intellectual of the Harlem Renaissance, once said that art must discover and reveal the beauty which prejudice and caricature have overlaid (Madison, 481)." The question at the heart of my project is can art escape the prejudice and caricature of the society in which it is performed? The social and political implications of this question affect all those involved in the production and consumption of Indian classical dance. What does the celebration of Indian spirituality mean in light of the marginalisation of subaltern women? How did Europe come to understand itself in relation to those they colonised and how did the colonised, in turn, come to understand themselves in relation to their own subordinates? How have these dynamics continued in the multicultural context where analogous questions of similarity/difference and tradition/modernity persist? That these questions converge around Indian classical dance demonstrates a deep interrelation between various histories, subjectivities, temporalities and cultural expressions.

It is hoped that my analysis of Indian classical dance and its intricacies may lead to a greater appreciation of this tradition as well as a greater awareness of the cultural as it necessarily interacts with the political. While it may seem clichéd to argue that the arts are a vehicle for social commentary and potential change, this point is pertinent in an analysis of Indian classical dance. Rather than resist essentialist notions by denying a connection between the dance and various aspects of Indian 'culture', this project suggests that in maintaining this link, a more ethical and accurate representation of

culture can come into being. To complicate the history of the dance is to simultaneously disrupt the essentialist notions of Indian culture and traditions circulated in multicultural societies such as Canada. Attending to the on-going production of the dance is to demand that 'ethnic' cultures be appreciated as dynamic and manifold. Bringing attention to the omissions and fissures of the dance's history should not be interpreted as an attempt to discredit this artistic tradition. Rather, it is an attempt to celebrate the dance's achievements while being mindful of its current limitations. It is only through such an approach that the dynamism of the dance and its culture more generally can claim integrity. While the dancer's bells may precede her arrival on the dais, her real power is what happens on stage.

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

...the ethical interrupts the epistemological in order to listen to the other as if it were a self, neither to punish nor to acquit.

-Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 1999

Often regarded as belonging to a different time and place, Indian classical dance is nonetheless deeply affected by the contemporary social and political contexts in which it is performed. The rich history of the dance, which calls upon archaeological and textual evidence to demonstrate its importance for social and religious life as early as the 2nd century BCE, often elides the dance's contemporary status by positing it as an ancient and timeless art. But the fact that the dance *does* have a long history should not be used to deny its living quality. Edward Said noted in *Orientalism* that this system of thought has the self-invested power and authority to override the 'Orient' to generalise a historic particularity into a cultural/civilisational trait. Without attending to the historicity of the dance, it too becomes generalised as an example of an anachronistic civilisation, tradition and belief system. The challenge is to understand the dance as an expression of Indian cultures and traditions without condemning it to premodernity, ossifying it as a relic or generalising it to speak for all of India and its people. To address this challenge necessitates an analysis of national identity and culture, an analysis that begins with larger themes of colonialism, nationalism and the liberal nation-state.

Given that the dance was influenced by and contributed to the nation-building project, this nationalist political exercise must first be addressed in order to appreciate the role of Indian classical dance within Indian culture. This calls attention to the political context of this nation and, by extension, its interactions with colonialism. Central to this formulation is the political and economic philosophies and discourse of modernity that sustained the colonial apparatus. Liberal theory has celebrated the social contract with the state as the source of individual rights and freedoms. In the context of colonization, it soon became apparent however that these rights did not extend to those defined as

subjects and not citizens. For the liberal citizen, the split between the private and public domains is established to guarantee his/her liberties. Critics of liberalism such as Karl Marx have questioned whether this split can in fact constitute the emancipation that it claims. According to Marx (1843), while individuals can be 'spiritually' or 'politically' free in a secular/liberal state, they remain bound to it as a result of material and economic inequalities and the experiences of alienation. Full emancipation is thus foreclosed by the state for Marx. This critique is important for the theoretical attention it draws to the limits of liberty, citizenship and the state, and is therefore useful to postcolonial analyses of community and nation. However, the struggle for decolonisation introduces a different point of analysis that must be simultaneously explored. While Marx critically assessed a state that had already been established in *On the Jewish Question*, a postcolonial application of his theories must respond to the fact that anti-colonial nationalism struggled *to establish* a state of its own. This tension is particularly evident in the writing of Indian nationalist Jawaharlal Nehru, who sought liberty through a (re)negotiation of the universal logic of liberalism and the democratic state. For nationalists, the rights and liberties promised by liberal theory were thus experienced through an adoption *and* transformation of the European political model, supporting Dipesh Chakrabarty's claim that "these themes [of the modern, liberal individual] have existed – in contestation, alliance, and miscegenation – with other narratives of the self and community (2000, 37)."

While Marx's critique of state-ordained 'liberties' poses an important challenge to anti-colonial nationalism and its attempt to implement a 'free' state, another critique of the nationalist movement must be attended to in order to further understand its

hegemonic potential. Franz Fanon warned against nativist forms of nationalism, which he perceived to be a re-implementation of the colonial script. Just as the state could not constitute full emancipation for Marx, the establishment of a nativist nationalism could not result in complete decolonization for Fanon. Although he does not theorise the state specifically, Fanon seems to conceive of the post-independence political state as organically tied to the nation. This nation-state is seen as politically and ethically necessary insofar as it is the product of an anti-colonial, national consciousness. For Fanon, it is crucial to distinguish national-consciousness from nationalism. The latter is also referred to as 'cultural consciousness' for it presupposes a cultural ontology that is presumed to precede the formation of the nation. It is in this capacity that nationalism runs the risk of reasserting the colonial script; as Fanon highlights, the histories of the colonized have been 'distorted', 'disfigured' and 'destroyed' by the 'perverted logic' of the colonizer so that they can never be truly known (1963, 210). Any nationalist attempts to return to the pre-colonial past must be tempered by the fact that "[t]he efforts of the native to rehabilitate himself and to escape from the claws of colonialism are logically inscribed from the same point of view as that of colonialism (1963, 212)."

For Fanon, the nation-state is important to decolonization for it is only through this struggle for national sovereignty that black/colonized Subjectivity can be realised. Marx, who generalises the state in order to deconstruct it, does not account for colonialism in *On the Jewish Question* and thus does not consider what emancipation from a colonial state might look like. This is not to discredit Marx's value to a postcolonial analysis but is rather an opportunity to put Marx and Fanon in conversation in order to open new points of investigation. Fanon's warnings that negritude can become

hegemonic parallel Marx's observations on the error of seeking emancipation through the state; two constructs that purport to bring liberation (negritude and the state) are revealed to be perpetual relations of unequal power masquerading as liberty. Furthermore, Marx questions the assumption of an *a priori* individual subjectivity, arguing that this is in fact produced and then naturalized by the liberal state. Unravelling this metalepsis, Marx's analysis draws necessary attention to the limits of liberal rights, making it important for a postcolonial analysis. Fanon also brings attention to the politics of subject formation by demonstrating the ways in which the 'black man' is produced always in opposition to the white man. For Fanon, it is crucial to transform black subjectivity, a deconstructive project that can be facilitated by Marx's interrogation of subjectivity more generally. Relating Marxist and Fanonian ethics can thus ground a more sustained critique against the restoration of hegemony in the postcolonial context.

Following the critiques of Marx and Fanon, it becomes possible to better contextualise examples of anti-colonial nationalist sentiments in India, such as those articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru's writing in *The Discovery of India* (1946) provides an informative example of both a nationalist attempt to seek liberty through the state – against which Marx warned – and to appeal to an ontological, pre-colonial culture – with which Fanon was concerned. Nehru's approach is both adoptive and transformative as he attempts to (re)invoke the universalism of liberal theory within the context of anti-colonial Indian nationalism. Applying Chakrabarty's formulation to Nehru's relationship with European imperialism and its attendant ideas of the modern nation-state, Nehru demonstrates a contestation of liberalism's inherent exclusivity, an

alliance with the philosophy's universal discourse of rights and a resulting miscegenation in its application to post-independence India.

Recognizing the exclusionary nature of the colonial state, Nehru attempts to overcome this by embracing a 'more' universal liberal theory, arguing that it is completely commensurate with the 'real' traditions and philosophies of India. According to Nehru, a functional organization of society that emphasises liberal rights, reason and citizenship is "in harmony with the old Indian ideal (1946, 394)." Nehru thus appeals to modernity *through* tradition. His narrative weaves together India's past and present, appealing to both while simultaneously participating in the liberal discourse of progress. He thus appears to distil European liberalism in order to (re)produce it in its 'purest' form. This begs the question as to whether such a project is in fact possible. As Uday Singh Mehta (1999) has shown, liberalism required a hierarchical and exclusionary ordering of 'civilisations' in its very claims to universalism, which enabled it to posit Britain as culturally superior and thus deserving of colonial power. For Mehta, liberalism necessitates exclusion and its relationship to imperialism is especially intimate. Attending to the exclusions inherent in liberalism, one can take Mehta's argument one step further to argue that this philosophy is always racialised. Race, therefore, cannot be taken out of the discourse of modernity in which the categories of traditional and modern stand in as racial synonyms. This point resonates with the discussion in the following chapters and further complicates the nationalist adoption of this framework.

The seminal ideas of Nehru must also be situated within the mechanisms of Orientalism aptly described by Edward Said and the many theorists he has inspired. Said (1978) defined Orientalism as a system of knowledge that relied upon an ontological and

epistemological differentiation between the Orient and the Occident, the East and the West. Colonial power relations enabled the coloniser to construct the colonised as its absolute Other; where the West was seen to be progressive the East was static, where Europe was rational the Orient was superstitious. And yet the irony of Orientalism – indeed, its very lasting effect - has been that the colonised also came to see and know themselves as Other, culturally and temporally. This is evidenced by Nehru, who constantly employed the language of development and stagnation by arguing that "our lives are encumbered with the dead wood of this past; all that is dead and has served its purpose has to go (1946, 387)." This argument alone might have corresponded with earlier European philosophers who perceived India as frozen in time or overpowered by the despotism of its customs (Hegel, J., 1823-25; Mill, J., 1858). However, Nehru was quick to reveal the difference between their opinions and his; for him, letting go of the 'dead' did not necessitate a complete break from the past but was rather a way to cleanse it for the present. Nehru saw value in those 'ancient' traditions that constituted the 'life-giving force' of Indian culture. This is exactly what Nehru appealed to in the very naming of his memoir, *The Discovery of India*; Nehru sought to 'discover' the very past that, according to Fanon, was 'distorted' by colonialism.

While embracing the universal in his engagement with liberalism, Nehru also replicated Orientalist divisions and colonial logic by ontologising India and Europe in order to contrast the two. The Prime Minister maintained that what India lacked in dynamism was possessed in the West to the point of excess (1946, 385). While he believed that India did have much to learn from the West, he also argued that the West had much to learn from India in return. This co-learning would lead to a tempered science

that could "bring the spirit and the flesh into creative harmony (Nehru 1946, 391)." Although India may have had a greater distance to travel in order to reach this pinnacle of modernity, Nehru saw in it a greater potential: "for the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past...fits in with the scientific temper and approach... It is based on a fearless search for truth, on the solidarity of man, even on the divinity of everything living, and on the free and co-operative development of the individual and the species, ever to greater freedom and higher stages of human growth (ibid)." India was thus destined to advance, but only because it was in 'her' tradition to do so. The ontologies of East and West continued despite the dismantling of official colonial rule.

Nehru's attitudes both complement and are complemented by Partha Chatterjee's model of the two realms of anti-colonial nationalism. According to Chatterjee (1999), nationalist logic created two domains: the material 'outer' realm in which the West was emulated, and the spiritual 'inner' realm in which India's 'distinctiveness' was preserved. While the colonised appealed to similarity in the outer realm in order to claim their rights as citizens, they maintained the idea of difference in the inner realm to preserve their cultural 'authenticity'. The outer domain can thus be seen as a place of alliance while the inner domain represents a site of contestation. The inner domain of 'true' Indian culture represented that area to which the colonizer had never gained access; the visual performance of dance suggests that its role in this realm was of great importance and celebration. However, as Chatterjee points out, this nationalist conceptualization of tradition occurred on the same discursive field as colonialism. That is to say, it assumed the same characteristics of India as traditional and spiritual that had been ascribed to it in the Orientalist imaginary; the only difference was the normative values that were

attributed to either side of the East/West binary. While the British saw Indian tradition and spirituality as a mark of inferiority, nationalists saw this as a sign of enlightened superiority. Further, Britain's obsession with reason and technological progress was assumed to represent a spiritual alienation to which Indians were supposedly immune by virtue of their culture. Nehru's contention that the West had much to learn from India by way of its spirituality reflects this. In this reading of the 'inner' realm, India's past and culture are reified and fetishised, suggesting a lack of the national consciousness which Fanon deemed necessary.

Chatterjee's critique of the Indian nationalist movement has important implications for the current multicultural climate. By identifying the inner realm as constitutive of 'true' Indian identity, nationalists once again placed culture in opposition to modernity; culture was associated with art, spirituality and emotion and was made to stand independent of reason, science and logic. This dichotomy is particularly problematic as it constructs 'culture' as incapable of embracing universalism and modernity. This sustains contemporary ideas that those marked by culture are ineligible of entering the universal fold associated with 'modern' multiculturalism. It also complicates universalism by restricting its applicability to particular groups, betraying the exclusivity that it requires. Recognising the modality of decolonisation movements and the ways in which they might reproduce colonial constructions brings attention to the paradox of universalism. By articulating anti-colonial sentiment through Enlightenment discourse, such nationalists were caught in a failed project of their own. Appealing to the nation meant that Indian nationalists were claiming their role in the universalising project. Yet the formation of a nation requires adherence to particularities, making its

aspirations to universality impossible. According to Chatterjee, the nation is at once premised on universality and yet opposes it in its specificity. This analysis resonates in the contemporary paradox of multiculturalism today. With its appeal to universalism and diversity, the ideals of multiculturalism cannot be realised so long as the priorities of nation are maintained. Multiculturalism as a national policy is a complete contradiction in terms.

Another contradiction characteristic of the nation is that of citizenship and exclusion. Etienne Balibar has brought attention to the inherent exclusions of the nation-state by exploring the paradoxical relationship between the universality of human rights on the one hand and the particularities of national belonging on the other (2004, 8). According to Balibar, this tension leads "inevitably to systems of exclusion (ibid)," not only between 'majorities' and 'minorities', but "more profoundly still, between populations considered native and those considered foreign, heterogeneous, who are racially and culturally stigmatised (ibid)." Balibar's study suggests that the nation-state is defined by both visible and invisible borders to determine who is a complete citizen and who does not fully belong. Exclusion is thus seen to be integral to the nation-form (2004, 23). This point is vital to the following chapters which deal with issues of national belonging and its lack thereof. It has implications for colonial and independent South Asia as well as 'multicultural' settler societies such as Canada; parallels can be drawn between the exclusion from the nation that marked *devadasi* existence and the exclusion that continues to shape contemporary immigrant realities.

For Balibar, issues of nation, community and identity overlap with the question of citizenship. Analysing the role of community within the nation, Chatterjee brings

attention to other aspects of the universal liberal narrative – capital, political economy and history. Reading Locke, Montesquieu and Hegel, Chatterjee argues that 'modern' European social theory did not account for community outside of its association with capital. This lack of perspective makes possible "both the posing of the distinction between state and civil society and the erasure of that distinction (Chatterjee 1999, 234)." For Chatterjee, this dual opposition/erasure is due to the new grand narrative in which ideas of the individual and the nation-state are both embedded – the narrative of capital (ibid). As the protagonist of the meta-narrative of history, capital is identified as having transformed the specificity of Europe - its mercantile trade, wars and conquests - into "a story of universal progress, development, modernisation and freedom (Chatterjee 1999, 235)." The destruction of community is deemed crucial for this narrative to take place. Capital is thus presented in opposition to community, which is presupposed as capital's prehistory. Furthermore, just as the notion of capital is assumed to be universal, so to is this (singular) concept of community. However, as Chatterjee highlights, whereas community was identified with Europe's past, it was assumed to be the colonized's present. A unilinear trajectory of progress is once again called upon to explain the developmental differences between colonized and colonizer. The two are made commensurate - similar enough to be measured by the same yardstick of development – so that Europe, in the form of capital, retains its position as the theoretical subject of history. Community replaces culture in the scale of civilisation's newest manifestation – the scale of capital.

Chatterjee's analysis of community as it is juxtaposed against capital is important for the attention it brings to the exclusivity of modernity. By measuring progress through

capital, the scale of civilisations is allowed to continue and that which does not correspond with the interests of capital is relegated to the realm of the pre-modern. Like community, certain cultures are made into relics of the past. Chatterjee's argument is not meant to suggest that capital has done away with community entirely. The point is that, while community remains a part of modern life, it is nonetheless denied legitimacy in the "modern knowledges of human society (1999, 237)." Bringing attention to community is an important political and ethical gesture for Chatterjee, who sees it as a limit to disciplinary power that can lead to a critique of modernity from within (ibid). Such an analysis is therefore important not only for the understanding it provides of the past, but also for its implications for the present. Once again, this resonates strongly in multicultural societies where various cultural groups are often referred to as 'communities' in order to further distance them from 'modern' forms of social organisation.

A critique of liberal narratives of progress also foregrounds Dipesh Chakrabarty's arguments, with their repudiation of colonial/nationalist discourses of historical transition. Chakrabarty (2000) analyses earlier historical accounts written by both colonisers and nationalists to show how they used themes of development, modernisation and capitalism to "read Indian history in terms of a lack, an absence or an incompleteness that translates into 'inadequacy' (2000, 32)." He is particularly interested by the ways in which the discipline of history has constructed a theoretical subject that is implicitly European so that, even when an Indian may attempt to come into his/her subjectivity

through 'Indian' history, he/she nonetheless reinscribes a European script[1]. The central paradox for Chakrabarty is that, despite the fact that the Eurocentric and exclusionary natures of universalism have been revealed, people in the decolonised world have continued to lay claim to the universal, thus re-performing the very (European) subjectivity that excluded them in the first place. Nationalist claims to the nation-state, citizenship and subjective individuality thus allow for the perpetual return of the same 'hyperreal' and Enlightened Europe that earlier justified colonisation.

Chakrabarty demonstrates the multiple divisions that occur to exclude certain people from claims to modernity, history and even full subjectivity. Firstly, by positing Europe as the 'silent referent of historical knowledge', all other histories are automatically rendered subaltern in status. The very theorisation of history thus creates external others who can never have full access to historical agency. A second split occurs within the context of the postcolonial nation itself. According to Chakrabarty, the subject of 'Indian' history is both the subject and object of modernity in that it "stands for an assumed unity called the 'Indian people' that is always split into two – a modernising elite and a yet-to-be modernised peasantry (2000, 40)." This split amongst the 'Indian people' resulted from the nationalist narrative that, after asserting its own (elite/Euro-oriented) subjectivity, gave to the subaltern peasants and workers "the cross of 'inadequacy' to bear (2000, 33)," therefore continuing the colonial discourse of 'lack.' Nationalist history thus produced subjects, but only at the cost of (re)subordinating its Others.

[1] It is important to note that Chakrabarty recognizes that ideas of a homogenous Europe, like a homogenous India, would "dissolve under analysis." But he maintains that such concepts must nonetheless be addressed as whatever analysis there has been has not yet done away with these constructs (2000, 28-29).

Chakrabarty's call to both European and decolonised scholars to 'provincialise Europe' is one example of the interventions that have been made to address these challenges of modernity. Such a political and philosophical project must "ground itself in a radical critique and transcendence of liberalism (that is, of the bureaucratic constructions of citizenship, the modern state, and bourgeois privacy that classical political philosophy has produced) (2000, 42)," for it is this self-justificatory narrative that has been imposed by both European imperialism and 'third world' nationalism. Historians and other theorists cannot, therefore, take notions of the nation-state or the modern citizen-subject for granted. Furthermore, they must also recognise the intertwined violence and idealism "that lies at the heart of the process by which the narratives of citizenship and modernity come to find a natural home in 'history' (2000, 45)." Questioning the social systems in which we live therefore entails questioning the very disciplines through which we study them.

Wider issues of tradition, modernity, liberalism, nationalism and colonialism are crucial to understanding the formation of many cultural interactions, practices and expressions. It is within this on-going postcolonial discussion that I situate my work in *Entertaining Subalternity*. But the task of constructive critique remains incomplete if the ways in which unequal power relations are maintained *within* a particular 'invented tradition' are once again suppressed. Focusing solely on the role of nationalism in the reconstruction of Indian dance or music (Bakhle, 2005) without attending to the ways in which this nationalist movement is gendered, for example, does little to deconstruct the functional role of power in this situation or to identify potential room for change. Studies of colonialism and nationalism have for a long time ignored the role of gender in these

movements. Even theorists such as Said and Fanon have been criticised for their silence on this issue. This is not to say that their theories should be discounted; as Ann Laura Stoler (1995) has argued in regards to race and Foucault, and Meyda Yegenoglu (1998) has shown in respect to gender and Said, the ways in which these seminal theorists can be used to shed light on the very things that they omitted cannot be underestimated. Yegenoglu has done this by maintaining the fundamental importance of sexual difference in the process of colonial subject formation through her discussion of fantasy and desire. In her reading, Orientalism is as much a gendered discourse as it is a racialised one.

The relationship between Orientalism, race, gender and class becomes apparent in an analysis of the discursive construction of sexuality. The role of sexuality is especially important given its major influence on the dance and its reconstruction. Exoticised as the emblem of Oriental sensuality and maligned as the portrayal of Eastern vulgarity, the *devadasi* has continually been read in reference to her sexuality. While my work looks at the production of the dance's spirituality through the tradition/modernity dyad, a different lens may be necessary in order to understand the production of its corresponding sexuality.

Michel Foucault (1991), while reifying the East/West binary, nonetheless provides an in-depth theoretical analysis of the relationship between governmentality, (il)licit sexualities and the institution of marriage. For Foucault, the shift of focus to population enabled a conceptualization of government that went beyond the model of the family (1991, 99). Despite this shift, the family remains important in its reappearance as an internal building block of population and thus as a fundamental instrument in its governing. Family is also important in terms of defining that which is sexually licit, as

marriage is seen to bring a sense of propriety to certain manifestations of sexuality. Furthermore, the role of class in determining sexual propriety cannot be overlooked; matrimony is seen to stand in for middle-class respectability while illicit sexuality is too often read as connected with poverty.

According to Foucault (1990), the realm of sexual propriety stands in contrast to the spaces that were (forcibly) created to accommodate for 'illegitimate' or deviant sexualities: "the brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client and the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric... seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted (1990, 4)." It is this shuttling between legitimate and illegitimate sexuality that is particularly informative in an analysis of the colonial discourse that posited Indian arts as vulgar and profane.

According to Thomas Metcalf (1995), the British were either unable or unwilling to conceive of the synthesis of eroticism and spirituality inherent in Hinduism and this led them to view *devadasi* practice as a form of prostitution (1995, 102). He argues that the figure of the prostitute, coupled with the British belief in Hinduism's 'unashamed' sexuality, was central to the colonial feminization of India and the Hindu religion. This imagination came to influence administrative action in relation to dancers, both religious and secular. For example, anti-*nautch* legislation was passed in Mysore (1910), Travencore (1930), Bombay (1934) and Madras (1947), reflecting a continuity in colonial and native elite attitudes. While the pre-legislation status and representation of *devadasis* were very much determined by the patriarchal natures of both the religious temple and the royal court, the anti-*nautch* movement was nonetheless indicative of shifting attitudes

towards the dance and its performers. The tastes and opinions of one patriarchal order were to be replaced by those of another.

Labelling temple dance as prostitution also allowed for the degradation of the courtesan-dancer who performed independently of religious institutions. Exemplifying Foucault's "room for illegitimate sexualities (1990, 4)," the *kotha*[2] was a site both celebrated and maligned in colonial discourses. While still subject to a patriarchal order that strictly defined the relative status of women in society, the *kotha* was also initially seen as a place of beauty, art and etiquette. Lucknow novelist and journalist Abdul Halim Sharar once claimed that, "until a person had association with courtesans, he was not a polished man... At the present time [c.1913] there are still some courtesans with whom it is not reprehensible to associate, and whose houses one can enter openly and unabashed (cited by Oldenburg 1992, 30)." Although Sharar's claim of 'unabashed' entry overlooks the fact that the courtesan was confined to the *kotha* and did not have access to complete social respectability, it nonetheless indicates certain attitudes in circulation during his time. Indeed, the arrival of the British in the seventeenth century did not see a rapid degradation of the dance; many officers were as enamoured of these dancers as were the Indian nobility. Many settlers of the British East India Company, as well as other British officers, patronised *nautch* dancers in an attempt to make up for the loss they felt for female companionship (Fabri 1974, 74). It was only with an increased desire to emulate Victorian morals on the part of the Indian elite and intensified assertions of incommensurability on the part of colonial officials that attitudes towards the once celebrated dancer became more scrutinising. The colonial encounter and the converging

[2] Often described as brothels, *kothas* were courtesan houses where musical and dance performances were held.

interests of British and Indian elites that this facilitated enabled this shift in attitudes, not any changes in the actual practices of these women. This shift resembles Foucault's analysis of the increasing emergence of laws pertaining to sex in Europe. As he describes in Victorian Europe, the number or nature of 'deviant' activities did not change, but the regulations that condemned their practice did:

> These polymorphous conducts were actually extracted from people's bodies and from their pleasures; or rather, they were solidified in them; they were drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, incorporated, by multifarious power devices. The growth of perversions is not a moralising theme that obsessed the scrupulous minds of the Victorians. It is the real product of the encroachment of a type of power on bodies and their pleasures. It is possible that the West has not been capable of inventing any new pleasures, and it has doubtless not discovered any original vices. But it has defined new rules for the game of powers and pleasures (Foucault 1990, 47-48).

While Foucault's initial analysis of sexuality did not explicitly make reference to race, the ways in which race works through and with sexuality cannot be overlooked. This is made evident by a comparison of the figure of the courtesan-dancer and that of Don Juan described in *The History of Sexuality*. According to Foucault, "[t]here were two great systems conceived by the West for governing sex: the law of marriage and the order of desires – and the life of Don Juan overturned them both (Foucault 1990, 39-40)." Given the deep interaction between Europe and its colonies, it is difficult to view these 'great systems' as limited to the West alone. As shown by the Madras Act, for example, 'the law of marriage' and 'the order of desires' were of similar concern for people in both colonial and independent India. Personally and financially independent, the image of the courtesan might provide a parallel example to Foucault's analysis of matrimonial regulation.

When Foucault speaks of Don Juan as threatening social norms of Victorian propriety, marriage and sex, one cannot help but wonder how this specific threat was also informed by Don Juan's perceived racial difference. As an 'exotic' figure, he embodied a sexuality that was threatening due to its difference from the supposed morality of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Not recognising the politics of race, Foucault does not account for this difference and thus offers a limited reading of this character. Observing this second dimension of the threat posed by Don Juan further illuminates the image of the Indian courtesan. While she might have been threatening to certain members of the Indian patriarchal elite, it was only with the increase of British colonial control that she was completely maligned and her wealth successfully appropriated (Oldenburg, 1992). Reading accounts of colonial officials – both favourable and hostile – demonstrates the extent to which the foreign-cum-exotic nature of her "bronze tint (as cited by Neville 2004, 45)" informed British opinions and fears.

Referring to Don Juan, Foucault states that "[u]nderneath the great violator of the rules of marriage [was a] stealer of wives... the shame of families, and an insult to husbands and fathers (1990, 39)." Analysing the context in which the Indian courtesan danced and lived reaffirms this image, but with an inversion of gender roles. Studying the rise of Indian classical music, Janaki Bakhle notes that amongst the earliest music appreciation societies in the 1870s, middle-class married women were encouraged to learn music "so their husbands did not have to leave their homes at night in search of musical entertainment (2005, 4)" provided by the "prostitutes who had co-opted music (ibid)." According to such music appreciation societies, reinstating the propriety of Indian music and the arts thus necessitated their rescue from those who had 'co-opted' it

by bringing it into the fold of marriage. In this assessment, the courtesan-entertainer was seen to be a 'stealer' of husbands and an 'insult' to wives.

Foucault understood the discursive production of sexuality to be indicative of the discipline required in the very process of subject formation. In addition to subjectivity, the question of identity must also be addressed. According to Stuart Hall, identity is grounded in fantasy, projection and idealization (1996, 4). Furthermore, it is a 'production' that is never complete, a process of 'becoming' as much as 'being' (1989, 222). Important in Hall's analysis is the notion that identity belongs as much to the future as it does the past; as he maintains, identity is comprised of the "names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narratives of the past (1989, 225)." The link between identity and history is thus made apparent.

An exploration of identity brings to light the relationship between subjectivity and consciousness on the one hand, and social organization and political discourse on the other. Hall argues that identity should be seen as a point of suture between 1.) discourses and practices of interpellation and 2.) the processes that produce subjectivities (1996, 5-6). Similarly, Katherine Pratt Ewing theorises the 'experiencing subject' as one who is both historically located *and* psychologically organized (1997, 5). She maintains that hegemony must be distinguished from individual consciousness so that the importance of both can be appreciated. According to Pratt, the desiring, experiencing subject stands at a nexus of discourses and is embedded in both a social and political field (1997, 15). Recognition is seen as the constituting experience at the heart of subjectivity, even if the forms of recognition may be different across time and space (ibid). Pratt's analysis of identity is important in that it highlights the complexity of subject formation without

limiting it to the sole context of postcolonialism. While her attempt to remind the reader that 'precolonial subjectivity' was just as complex as current subjectivity is theoretically significant, the magnitude of colonialism and its impact on a variety of subjectivities cannot be undermined. To privilege a 'precolonial' subjectivity risks celebrating that which cannot be known and perpetuating the very logic of colonialism.

Thus drawing upon a variety of theoretical perspectives, this study stands at the nexus that is necessarily created by the interaction of colonialism and nationalism, tradition and modernity, past and present. Yet it does not stand here alone for it is simultaneously supported by the theoretical and political necessity of understanding the interlocking nature of gender, race and class. This is furthered by an analysis of liberal theory, which is as crucial to understanding the colonial project as it is to certain nationalist movements. It is thus through an examination of liberal theory, with its language of modernity and capital, that such colonial *and* nationalist projects can be deconstructed. However, it is not enough to study the external factors of a larger social system without attending to the complexities of the subject/identity formation that occur within such systems. These questions must also be explored in order for the two systems to be read alongside each other. It is in reading the two together that their co-productive natures can be revealed. This requires that attention be brought to the relationship between different cultures, spaces, times and social actors. It is therefore a project of spatial, cultural and temporal contrapuntalism. That such a study can be embarked upon through an exploration of Indian classical dance demonstrates just how rich this artistic tradition really is.

THE DANCE OF NATION AND MOTHER:

Colonial Landscapes, Nationalist Bodyscapes and Indian Classical Dance

Our history is the sacred biography of the Mother. Our philosophies are the revelations of the Mother's mind. Our arts – our poetry and our paintings, our music and our drama, our architecture and our scripture, all these – are the outflow of the Mother's diverse Emotional Moods and Experiences. Our religion is the organised expression of the Soul of the Mother. The outsider knows her as India. The outsider sees only her outer and lifeless physical frame. The outsider sees her as a mere bit of earth, and looks upon her as only a geographical expression or entity. But we, her children, know her even today as our fathers and their fathers had done before, for countless generations, as a Being ... As Our Mother and the Mother of our Race.

-Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Soul of India*, 1923

The struggle for decolonisation illustrates important instances of subject formation. Central to this process is the spatial context that both shaped and was shaped by various anti-colonial movements in search of national sovereignty. Colonialism was predicated upon particular cartographies that made certain areas intelligible and therefore governable for European rule. In India, these geographic and social understandings of space became important sites for nationalist reclamations of identity independent of colonial domination. Combining ideas of gender, nation and spirituality, the nationalist appeal to a unified India relied upon the same colonial script that initially facilitated the power of the Raj. However, this appeal simultaneously transcended the colonial representation of India in meaningful and important ways. India, as a land often characterised by its 'tradition' of spirituality, was as much a product of colonial logic as it was a re-interpretation of it. Deconstructing reified notions of Indian traditions reveals their dynamism and historicity, and suggests that lived experiences inform spiritual beliefs and practices inasmuch as they are informed by them. Attention must therefore be brought to the relationship between the spiritual, the spatial and the national. This is done through an analysis of the nationalist imagining of *Bharata Mata* or Mother India, an analysis that suggests the spiritual is intimately interwoven with the national in the Indian context of decolonisation.

A study of sacred space is made difficult by the abstract nature of both categories. Spaces serve many functions while spirituality has many interpretations. Examining the postcolonial context, it becomes apparent that spirituality - often associated with the 'pre-modern'- is in fact constantly re-produced and re-negotiated in relation to modernity. Therefore, spirituality and sacred space cannot be disassociated from the contemporary

political and social geographies in which they occur. In the instance of *Bharata Mata*, space and spirituality must be analysed alongside one another for they have repeatedly been shown to co-exist in the nationalist imaginary. This relationship between the spiritual and the spatial provides one glimpse into the complex relationship of race, gender and nation.

Spaces, like subjectivities, are produced. In order to understand the production of Indian national space, attention must first be brought to the metaphorical and material functions of space more generally. Henri Lefebvre has argued that spaces should not simply be read as texts by stressing the importance of space as it is experienced in the everyday. Reducing space to text overdetermines it in ways that sustain particular relations of power, especially relations of colonial domination. According to Lefebvre, "[t]o underestimate, ignore and diminish space amounts to the overestimation of texts, written matter and writing systems, along with the readable and visible, to the point of assigning these a monopoly on intelligibility (1974, 62)." The colonial survey and census are two examples through which this 'monopoly of intelligibility' was implemented and sustained (Blomley, 2003; Chakrabarty, 2002). These two technologies of colonial rule functioned to initiate ideas of India as a coherent land and people, ideas that would later be reclaimed by the nationalists who rallied for independence.

Reading Lefebvre in regards to the production of monumental spaces, Derek Hook (2005) describes a 'triangulation' of space, power and subjectivity. He does this to demonstrate that, not only are space and subjectivity discursively related to power, but that the two are related to each other in that subjects have "particular *psychical* investments in space (2005, 694 emphasis in original)." This brings necessary attention to

the individual's imaginative and affective engagement with space, which requires an analysis of the unconscious (ibid). This relation between subject and place is important for monumental spaces, which Hook describes as dependent upon an 'intersubjectivity' of identity and space (2005, 701). Hook elaborates upon this to suggest a "circuit of intersubjectivity (ibid)" which advances "the idea that there is a kind of making of the subject that is going on here [in monumental space], where the subjectivity of space is the subjectivity of the subject who, in the case particularly of monumental sites, animates its circuit of power by finding ... [his/her] place within an arrangement of power-identity of which [he/she] effectively become[s] part (ibid)." That is to say, monumental spaces require "the involvement of human subjectivity/corporeality to complete the ontological gap of their own ambiguous (dis)embodiments (ibid)." The production of monumental space thus requires and facilitates the production of particular subjectivities through the interaction between subject and space.

Spatially grounded, the struggle for national sovereignty illustrates a particular type of territorial commemoration. Premised as it is on the formation of national identity and space, the idealised nation can therefore be seen as a monumental space. This is particularly so for the example of *Bharata Mata*, which has been (and is) continually reinscribed through practices of representation and commemoration. It is this figure of *Bharata Mata* that enabled nationalists to celebrate the nation as indigenous, maternal and spiritual while nonetheless effectively 'modern.'

Theorists on nationalism have revealed a strong connection between nation-spaces and citizen-nationals. Renee Bergland (2000) has described this bond as the internalisation of national space and sees it as a necessary characteristic of nationalism.

Building upon Etienne Balibar's concept of *homo nationalis*, Bergland argues that the psychic spaces of citizens (nationals) are transformed into national territory (2000, 4-5). As she and Balibar suggest, this idea can be traced back to the eighteenth century when political theorist Johan Fichte believed it was necessary that the "external frontiers of the state" become the "internal frontiers" of the citizen in order for the nation to establish itself (ibid). The intersubjectivity of place and subject is once more brought to the fore.

National spaces require a relationship to landscape to support ideas of indigeneity and belonging. Yet nationalist discourses also rely upon notions of a people united through race/ethnicity/culture. The technologies of creating and sustaining a nation have been revealed to exist in many forms, be it through print capitalism (Anderson, 1991) or the knowledge/power nexus of governmentality (Foucault, 1991). Such analyses focus on the generalities of governed nationhood without looking at how particular bodies are brought together and imagined as a nation through the specificities of the landscape. Radhika Mohanram attempts to reconcile the two ideas of nationalism – the spatial and the social – by arguing that nationalism first requires, and then represses, its relation to the land in order to reflect a united 'people' (1999, 6-7). Racial/ethnic/cultural ideas of national belonging therefore necessitate a relationship to landscape if only to repress it. Ideas of race and space are thus integral to discourses of the nation.

Put in the context of decolonisation, nationalist discourse and its use of space take on significant meaning. Uday Singh Mehta has argued that nationalism focused less on history and more on culture and geography as the "evidentiary basis for the readiness of the nation (1999, 113)." As Mehta has shown in his book *Liberalism and Empire*, the European meta-narrative of history had been used to justify colonialism by presupposing

incommensurable historical and cultural differences to legitimise and implement a scale of civilisations. This scale of difference allowed for the continued assertion that liberal rights and theories were universal while it simultaneously legitimised colonial domination and exclusion. Nationalist appeals to culture and geography can thus be seen as a reclamation of identity and power that resisted the discriminatory logic of this form of history. Yet, even in this re-possession, the earlier colonial production of 'Indian' identity and space remained largely unexamined and thus taken for granted by the nationalists who claimed it.

The primacy of mapping is strongly upheld in the meta-narrative of history that Mehta describes. Part of the self-congratulatory assumptions of civilising the 'barbaric' colonised was the idea that Europeans brought with them the tools to separate and make intelligible social and spatial environments. Europe, self-imbued with the gifts of science and reason, saw the development of cartography as a mark of cultural and intellectual superiority. According to Kathleen M. Kirby (1996), the development of the European Enlightenment individual was/is inextricably tied to specific concepts of space and the technologies to master it (1996, 45). The mastery of this Cartesian subject created coherent and consistent boundaries that could be transformed into ideas of property, ownership and individuality. Mapping thus became a principal method for maintaining a separation between self and other, human and nonhuman (Kirby 1996, 49). Mapping the space of the colonised Other was an assertion of power both over space and the bodies that inhabited it.

This articulation of power can be seen in a variety of descriptive writings on India. For example, Hegel devoted a portion of his chapter on India in the *Philosophy of History* (1823-25) to the geographic features of the subcontinent:

> India Proper is the country which the English divide into two large sections: the *Deccan* – the great peninsula which has the Bay of Bengal on the east, and the Indian Sea on the west – and *Hindostan*, formed by the valley of the Ganges, and extending in the direction of Persia. To the northeast, Hindostan is bordered by the Himalaya, which has been ascertained by Europeans to be the highest mountain range in the world, for its summits are about 26,000 feet above the level of the sea. ...We call the inhabitants of the great country which we have now to consider Indians, from the river *Indus* (the English call them *Hindoos*). (143-144).

Aside from his references to specific geographic features, 'India Proper' is defined only by its relation to the English. Even the extraordinary summit of the Himalayan region relies upon Europe to ascertain it. In this analysis Hegel's Indians (and Britain's *Hindoos*) are denied any subjective agency to identify themselves on their own terms. The fact that this was written by a German philosopher and not, for example, an English colonial official, demonstrates the extent to which the authority to map colonial spaces was assumed to reside only in the realm of European reason. The hubris of such an assumption resonates in Hegel who concludes that 'Indians' "themselves have never given a name to the whole, for it has never become one Empire, and yet we consider it as such (1923-25, 144)." While a unified vision of the subcontinent might not have been in circulation prior to the colonisation of India – although rulers such as Asoka and Akbar arguably attempted to unify the whole land under their respective empires – this vision would develop a great deal of currency in the nationalist discourse that sought to reclaim agency from the presumptive attitudes of Europe.

This colonial description of India can be seen to have elicited a strong reaction from nationalists who both internalised and transcended it to come into being as 'a people'. In so doing, they are seen to support Mohanram's contention that nationalist discourse requires a relationship to the landscape if only to repress it in exchange for the language of ethnic/racial identity. For the nationalists who sought to claim their subjectivity from colonial domination, it was imperative that the nation be presented as indigenous. That is to say, the nation that was created through the colonial encounter had to be understood as organic and representative of the very essence of 'India' in order to elicit the affective responses of nationalism. This was particularly evident in the Indian *swadeshi* movement that struggled for self-rule. For example, Bipin Chandra Pal wrote in 1923 that:

> [t]hose who so persistently deny any fundamental historic unity or any real national individuality to our land and to our people, either do not know, or they do not remember the fact that we never called our country by the alien name of India or even that of Hindoostan. Our name was, and is still today, among the Arya population of the country, Bharatavarsha (1958, 70).

This statement can be read as a response to attitudes such as Hegel's as it advances the idea of a united, pre-colonial nation. In this way, Chandra Pal demonstrates an internalisation of national space by ascribing it pre-colonial status. However, this statement also illustrates a rigorous transcending of conventional space in that it argues against the colonial thesis that India was a "mere geographic expression (ibid)." For Chandra Pal, India represented both a unified land and people in ways that went beyond the colonial survey and the meta-narrative of European history. In fact, Chandra Pal rejected outright those colonial appellations for India in favour of its 'true' name – *Bharatavarsha* (the land of Bharata). In this statement, Chandra Pal attempted to claim

the right for the people of India to define their own geographical borders and histories through and against conventional cartography.

Although proclaiming himself to be secular, Chandra Pal betrayed his religious bias in appealing to *Bharata*, a term steeped in Hindu mythology. By also rejecting the name Hindoostan - the term used by the Mughals to refer to the land of the Indus River - Chandra Pal excluded Muslims from those who could make 'authentic' claims to the nation. Applying the term *Bharata* to the map of nineteenth and twentieth century India was thus not only an attempt to refute that appellation employed by the British, it was an exercise in re-invoking an ancient and racialised Hindu past. The assertion of a collective identity and history was thus made to rely upon a selective approach that forcefully and simplistically connected past and present. As Chandra Pal's statement suggests, the re-establishment of a pre-colonial national space was coterminous with the re-inscription of a particular history that was to be advanced more generally as a national history.

By the time Chandra Pal wrote in the early twentieth century, the map of India was widely recognised indicating its "logo status (Ramaswamy 2002, 168)." However, this was after visual representations of the subcontinent had undergone various changes over several centuries. The appearance of India as a peninsular entity oriented from north to south first appeared in 1502, shortly after Vasco da Gama's voyage to Calicut on the southern part of the subcontinent. However, the shape of India continued to vary in European representations all the way through the seventeenth century, with some maps reverting to the Ptolemaic non-peninsular appearance as late as 1710 (Gole, 1976; Ramaswamy, 2002). It was with the various survey practices and cartographic exercises of the colonial state that the subcontinent's peninsular form was established in the

eighteenth century (Ramaswamy; Goswami, 1998). While cartographic representations gained wider currency in subsequent years, it was the emergent patriotism of the early twentieth century that increased the popularity of the map, which was reproduced "on letterheads and banners of nationalist organisations, on the mastheads of nationalist journals and newspapers, in nationalist advertisements for various *swadeshi* products, and other print ephemera (Ramaswamy 2002, 167)." So popular was the standardised map by this time, it was rarely accompanied by a label to identify it (ibid). By the early 1930s, the map had become linked to anti-colonial activism and was deployed to visually demonstrate the consequences of colonial rule and depletion. The map thus went from a technology of colonial governmentality to an emblem for nationalist sovereignty.

Chandra Pal's assumption of a 'national individuality' based on 'our land' and 'our people' is therefore contextualised by the standardised image of the subcontinent popular by that time. Furthermore, his appeal to India as *Bharata* was also a familiar construct at the time of his writing, having predated him by two generations. Tracing the consolidation of India as *Bharata*, Manu Goswami has credited Raja Shiva Prasad's three-volume *Itihas timiranasak* (the English title was *A History of India*) with first conflating the map of India with *Bharata*. Initially published in 1864, *Itihas timiranasak* was the standard history textbook in the vernacular schools of the United Provinces until the turn of the century (Goswami 1998, 172). In this account, Prasad noted that the term *Hindu* was first used by Arabic travellers to designate the people who lived east of the Indus River. This suggested that the term was a geographic descriptor that could be perceived as 'foreign' and did not necessarily connote an indigenous/religious identity. According to Goswami, the fact "that the most interior sign of belonging – that is, the

category *Hindu* – was, from the standpoint of [Prasad's] own narrative, foreign, invoked a profound anxiety about the essential alienation of the national core (1998, 180)." Substituting the insufficient term Hindu with the category *Arya* therefore placed emphasis "on the continuities of a sacred geography and sought to smooth over historical dislocations (Goswami 2004, 181)." Sixty years later, Chadra Pal's appeal to the '*Arya* population of the country' could also be seen as a direct attempt to relieve this anxiety; in so doing Chandra Pal was able to establish the idea of original ancestry by claiming an indigenous identity grounded in pure and originary space. For both Prasad and Chandra Pal, notions of Indian/Hindu indigeneity and belonging required a nation-space that could be directly traced to time immemorial. The source of such a spatial imagining was to be found in ancient Vedic scripture.

Prasad's analysis of historical geography in India demonstrates an intermingling of 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of knowledge. On the one hand, he appealed to the Vedic concept of *Bharata* to emphasise the enduring quality of the nation. Yet, as Goswami points out, his delineation of Vedic geography was "interspersed with long polemics against Puranic geographical imaginings (1998, 181)," thus undermining it. According to the Vedic Puranas, the geography of *Bharata* was divided into nine sections and took various shapes, including that of the lotus flower, the bow, the rhomboid and the tortoise facing east (Ramaswamy, 2002, Goswami, 2004). Rejecting this form of geographical knowledge, Prasad sought to restore an intelligible representation of the nation that was in accordance with "'modern world history' (*adhunik jagadh itihasa*) (cited in Goswami 2004, 181)." In order to fulfil this aim, Prasad thus attached a map of colonial India to his writing as *the* representation of *Bharata* (ibid). As Goswami

observes, "[o]nly at the time in which Prasad was writing did a notion of Bharata as a unified national entity roughly coextensive with the boundaries of the colonial state emerge (ibid)." Although Prasad appropriated the concept of *Bharata* from Puranic scripture, thus creating an affective relationship between (Hindu) national and landscape, he nonetheless drastically transformed it in order to make it intelligibly 'modern.' For Prasad, as for many other nationalists, the 'modern' was employed to legitimise the 'ancient' and 'traditional'.

The colonial space of India was thus nationalised and nativised into *Bharata* by the 1870s, a nomination that received official recognition in Article One of the Constitution of India, passed on January 26, 1950. Yet *Bharata's* affective hold on Indian nationalists was not limited to its cartographic representation alone. Personified as the (often divine) mother, India as *Bharata Mata* allowed for numerous ways through which her subjects could relate to her. Radhika Mohanram has argued that the nation is always embodied and that the idealised body of nationalist discourse is always gendered (1999, 59). As a maternal figure, *Bharata Mata* offered nationalists the opportunity to reclaim and repossess the colonial space of the British Raj. Her femininity required protection, her divinity invoked reverence and her maternity united the nation through familial ties. It was thus *through* her that nationalists came to know themselves as more than just colonised subjects.

Images of *Bharata Mata* began to appear alongside the emergence of the earliest nationalist cartographies of India. Cries of *Bharata Mata Ki Jai* ('Victory to Mother India') accompanied *swadeshi* protests as early as 1909 (Goswami 2004, 438). While India had occasionally been represented as a female entity since the 1860s, by the time

the revolutionary Gadhar Party[3] published its journal cover depicting Mother India in 1923, the association had become cemented. This image, which Sumitha Ramaswamy analyses in her detailed historicisation of popular Indian cartography, creatively depicts a woman whose body - along with her flowing hair and sari – emerges from a terrestrial globe to outline the shape of modern India. Similar images have appeared in literary texts, songs and paintings, all of which share an idealised image of feminine beauty in their celebrations of the Mother. Depicted as a 'natural' beauty with a serene face and simple adornments, Mother India did not need to indulge in vanity; her concern was for her children and nation.

Analysing the personified figure of Mother India, Ramaswamy has referred to the nation as a bodyscape referring to "a species of the modern map that is put to work in ways that are different from the tasks of the disenchanted cartographic productions of the state (2002, 154)." For Ramaswamy, colonial space was 'disenchanted' for the reason that it was simply regarded as empirical, scientific and thus affectively empty. The Indian bodyscape thus inserted the Mother into an impersonal map, giving it a living quality. Recalling Hook's analysis of monumental space, one can say that the bodyscape of Mother India effectively 'subjectified' the nation space through a nationalist interaction with it.

Postcolonial and feminist scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which the nation is associated with the woman. Nira Yuval Davis (1997), for example, has outlined the ways in which women are constructed as the biological, symbolic and cultural

[3] The Ghadar Party was an expatriate activist group based in the United States and India whose aim it was to liberate India from British rule. They began publishing their newspaper out of San Francisco in 1913 and were actively involved in politics in India and America/Canada, including the Komagata Maru affair in British Columbia in 1914.

reproducers of the nation. Analysing Orientalist discourse, Meyda Yegenoglu has shown that the veiled woman was considered to be a metonym for the entire 'Orient' in Europe's encounters with the 'Muslim world.' Further, in the instance of India, Partha Chatterjee has demonstrated the ways in which the 'inner' sphere of 'authentic' Indian culture and society was seen to be the woman's domain in its association with 'spirituality' and 'tradition.' According to Chatterjee, this connection was entirely the outcome of a dominant middle-class culture that was coeval with the era of nationalism. The link between woman and nation thus "served to emphasise with all the force of mythological inspiration what had in any case become a dominant characteristic of femininity in the new construct of 'woman' standing as a sign for 'nation,' namely, the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity, and so on (Chatterjee 1999, 131)." Mother India thus represented idealised attributes encouraged for nationalists in general and women in particular.

While *Bharata Mata* was celebrated for her femininity, the patriarchal underpinnings of this cannot be overlooked. It is important to note that in most depictions, her devotees are always represented as men. Popular images show her embracing Subhas Chandra Bose, a prominent leader of the Indian Independence movement and two-time president of the Indian National Congress; blessing the revolutionary Bhagat Singh who was martyred at the age of 24 by the English government; surrounded by renowned male figures, both religious and nationalist (including Jesus, Gandhi and Nehru). One of the most interesting depictions shows her grieving over the wounded body of Mohandas K. Gandhi. In this painting, she is shown balancing the flag of independent India as she cradles the Mahatma, glittering tears

resting on her cheeks. This picture depicts her as a real woman and does not rely upon inventive ways of reproducing her body in the shape of the subcontinent, suggesting that the more India's national status was secured after Independence, the less overt the visual connection between the continent and the Mother had to be [4]. Throughout these various depictions, the associations made between *Bharata Mata* and her devotees continually recall the relationship between mother and son.

The Sanskritised and gendered representations of *Bharata Mata* had several implications, especially for male nationalists. The fact that she was always demurely dressed in a sari wearing all the markers of traditional authenticity associated her with everything that was "truly and honourably 'Indian' (Ramaswamy 2002, 180)." Her beauty and maternal benevolence were/are meant to offer comfort to her nationalist/male children, literally demonstrating Radhika Mohanram's observation that the "woman's body functions as a mediator for male citizens to experience the landscape and the nation as nurturing, comforting and familiar (1999, 83)." As Mohanram suggests, this relationship between the female body and the male citizen means that a female citizen is unable to experience the national landscape in the same, comforting way. Relying upon a visual representation of the woman, the image of *Bharata Mata* thus writes women citizens out of nationalist discourse; *Bharata Mata's* daughters are once again ignored.

Establishing nationalists as the protective sons of *Bharata Mata* also provided a way of re-asserting Indian masculinity in response to colonial assumptions that read India as inferior. In his path breaking work, Edward Said observed the ways in which Orientalist discourse constructed the 'East' using feminised tropes of lasciviousness,

[4] Interestingly, this image recalls Christian/Western representations of the Virgin Mary embracing the body of Jesus. Relatively more recent, this particular picture might be seen as a 'modern' attempt at non-Hindu symbolism.

weakness and indulgence. Following suit, Thomas Metcalf has argued that Indian men were perceived as feminine when compared to British men, assumed to be civilisationally superior and secure in their masculinity. Indian nationalists were thus able to re-claim their virility by articulating their relationship to the nation-space in terms of protection, a discourse that required very specific gender constructs. This task was furthered by equating invasion with penetration and violation in the patriotic imaginary (Ramaswamy 2002, Goswami 2004). As an embodied space with a history of conquest, *Bharata Mata* represented both an anxiety and a call to action for patriarchal nationalists. According to Goswami, "it was precisely this rhetoric of despoliation of Bharata Mata by the predatory figure of British colonial capital and Muslim assault that discursively summoned a novel sense of collective political agency (2004, 201)." Indian/Hindu nationalists thus came into being through the national landscape and against the British/Muslim foreigner.

In addition to personifying the nation as indigenous and maternal, thus inspiring an affective relationship between citizen-national and nation-space, the bodyscape of Mother India also sacralised it in a way that would have been impossible for the Cartesian 'disenchanted' map. An "object of geopiety (Ramaswamy 2002, 181)," *Bharata Mata* thus embodies a third characteristic – the nation as sacred. The divinity of Mother India was suggested early on by associating her with such Hindu goddesses as Lakshmi, Saraswati and Durga (also referred to as Mothers). In fact, many of the paintings of *Bharata Mata* recall visual representations of these and other goddesses. This again causes significant pause when considering the Indian state and its self-perceived secularism. Not only does the term *Bharata* refer to a Sanskritised past that excludes numerous citizens of other religions (India has the second largest Muslim

population in the world after Indonesia), its personification of the divine Mother also ties the nation to a specifically Hindu imagination. This was evident in the 1936 consecration of the *Bharata Mata Mandir* (Mother India Temple) in Banaras (Varanasi). A popular attraction for patriots and tourists alike, the temple had no iconic depiction of the Mother when it was first constructed. Instead, she was represented only by a marble map that detailed the topographic features of the subcontinent to scale. The (modern) map of India was thus intertwined with, and indeed crucial to, signifying *Bharata Mata* as a goddess; her divinity depended on it.

According to theological scholar Belden C. Lane, sacred spaces are discursively produced as "storied spaces (1988, 11)." Sacred spaces are said to be ordinary spaces that are ritualistically made extraordinary. They are therefore both local (in their geographic specificity) and universal (in their affective connection to spirituality). Lane attributes an ontological essence to such spaces by arguing that they exist, waiting to be discovered. Lane's analysis, though helpful, must be refined as the ways in which sacred spaces are produced cannot be ignored. An analysis of sacred space therefore requires an examination of both social and religious geographies. In the context of India, it becomes evident that the nationalist context of the anti-colonial struggle (re)produced a spirituality that, though calling upon 'ancient' tradition, was nonetheless deeply indebted to the language of modernity.

If an analysis of sacred space relies upon the tension between local and universal, this is true for India as well as for Indian classical dance. In addition to *Bharata Mata*, India has also been referred to as *Matri Bhumi* (Goswami 2004, 203-207). This initiates a potential slippage as the Sanskrit term 'bhumi' can also be applied to the earth more

generally. To this end, the term *Matri Bhumi* can parallel the idea of Mother Earth. This raises an interesting if somewhat troubling distinction/conflation of local and universal conceptions of space. This tension is illustrated by one of India's greatest nationalist figures, Jawaharlal Nehru:

> Sometimes as I reached a gathering, a great roar of welcome would greet me: *Bharata Mata ki Jai* – Victory to Mother India! I would ask them unexpectedly what they meant by that cry, who was this *Bharata Mata*, Mother India, whose victory they wanted? My question would amuse them and surprise them, and then, not knowing exactly what to answer, they would look at each other and at me. I persisted in my questioning. At last a vigorous *Jat*, wedded to the soil from immemorial generations, would say that it was the *dharti*, the good earth of India that they meant. What earth? Their particular village patch, or all the patches in the district or province, or in the whole of India? And so question and answer went on, till they would ask me impatiently to tell them about it. I would endeavour to do so and explain that India was all this that they had thought, but it was much more. The mountains and the rivers of India, and the forests and the broad fields, which gave us food, were all dear to us, but what counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them and me, who were spread out all over this vast land. *Bharata Mata,* Mother India, was essentially these millions of people, and victory to her meant victory to these people. You are parts of *Bharata Mata*, I told them, you are in a manner yourselves *Bharata Mata*, and as this idea slowly soaked into their brains, their eyes would light up as if they had made a great discovery (1946, 60).

This excerpt is interesting for it indicates a relationship between nationalist discourse, geographic landscape and ideas of indigineity that must be traced back to "immemorial generations." What is more, it directly correlates India the land with India the people so that the two become inseparable. In Nehru's analysis, India is thus to be found in the form of the nation as well as in its *dharti*, its earth, its *bhumi*.

This tension between local and universal, *Bharata* and *bhumi*, is potentially significant for the Indian classical dance practice of the *bhumi pranam* (salutation).

Having examined the national, gendered and spiritual implications of *Bharata Mata*, the *bhumi pranam's* ritualistic production of sacred space must be read alongside its recognition of national space. The *bhumi pranam* signifies the beginning and end of a dancer's practice, whether in daily rehearsal or professional performance. In the first instance, it is a small gesture whereby the dancer lowers herself to touch the ground and then her eyes, symbolically connecting herself to the earth thus seeking its blessings. On stage, it has enjoyed more elaborate choreography, beginning with the dancer making an offering of flowers before repeating the *pranam* in its more complicated form to music. While the *pranam* represents a personal and spiritual connection, it may provide greater insight into the productive function of Indian national space. Following Nehru's sophistic observations, one can similarly ask of the dancer "to whom do you pay homage, the earth? *Dharti? Bharata?*"

It should be noted that the more complex *bhumi pranam* commences a longer piece that is an invocation of a certain deity. While the dance changes according to the particular piece and is always accompanied by the singer who recites the text that honours the deity to whom the dance is dedicated, the *bhumi pranam* with which it begins has no such textual accompaniment. Thus, its addition to the dance should be seen as a very deliberate act that resulted from the codification of the dance as a performance art in the mid-twentieth century. That the dance's renaissance was coterminous with the nationalist era that popularised the image of *Bharata Mata* may have even more influence than initially anticipated.

If the *bhumi pranam* can be related to prevalent ideas of *Bharata Mata/Matri Bhumi*, it can be seen to have several implications that must be explored. In Partha

Chatterjee's analysis of nationalist discourse, he observed that the 'inner' realm that represented 'authentic' Indian culture was also associated with the spiritual and the traditional. By characterising the *bhumi pranam* as a spiritual exercise while simultaneously performing it on stage, this inner domain could be called upon as a public assertion of the organic 'authenticity' of the dance. That is to say, the *bhumi pranam* can be one way in which the authentic 'Indianess' of Indian classical dance is guaranteed and performed. While this line of reasoning may seem reductionist, the anxiety over cultural identity and authenticity that marked the nationalist movement cannot be underestimated. The very spatiality of the *bhumi pranam* can therefore be seen as a reaffirmation of the dance's relation to the nation.

Second, the *bhumi pranam* may also be an exercise in managing the dancer's sexuality, which is inescapable given her performance. According to Chatterjee, the split between the inner/spiritual domain and the outer/material domain enabled nationalist bourgeois women to venture outside the home without their femininity coming under threat. This is because their feminine identity was fixed to the spiritual realm and would therefore be unaffected by the outer realm that replaced colonial rule. As examples, Chatterjee cites the facts that India's Constitution guaranteed women's suffrage from the very beginning without great resistance and that women were active members in the professional sphere (1999, 131). Rather than negate the differential relations of power between male and female, this can be seen to suggest a different constellation of power in the nationalist context. Despite women's perceived mobility in the outer realm, linking femininity with the inner domain nonetheless (re)inscribed patriarchal domination. Chatterjee argues that one way in which patriarchy was maintained was through the

"inverted ideological form of the relation of power between the sexes: the adulation of woman as goddess or as mother (1999, 130)." According to Chatterjee, the association of woman as goddess/mother "served to erase her sexuality in the world outside the home (1999, 131)." While 'erase' might be too strong a term, the potential desexualisation of nationalist women calls attention. Given that the first professional dancers were women from privileged and 'proper' backgrounds, how was their sexuality to be represented in the very public realm of performance? One way might have been through the *bhumi pranam*. By paying homage to the de-sexualised Mother-as-goddess, the dancer can perhaps counterbalance the performative sexuality that is suggested by the very nature of her dance. The *bhumi pranam* not only sacralises the space of the dance, it sanitises the dance itself.

By marking the performance stage as a sacred space, the *bhumi pranam* can also be seen to facilitate the dance's voyage from temple to auditorium. Such a delineation of space may not have been necessary when the dance was performed within the temple precincts as the sacred nature of that space was already established. Performed on the modern stage, however, the dance may have required a connection to sacred space even if this had to be produced for a temporary period of time (the duration of the performance). That the codification of the dance was accompanied by its performance outside the temple setting suggests that a connection had to be maintained between the dance and the spiritual tradition that it claimed. In this regard, the *bhumi pranam* can be considered to (re)produce the sacred space originally represented by the temple, laying the ground for the rest of the performance.

Finally, the *bhumi pranam* has specific implications for the dancers of the diaspora as it functions to make the dance universally relatable and yet specifically national/Indian. By appealing to the notion of Mother Earth, the dancer who practices the *bhumi pranam* can feel connected to the dance no matter who she is or where she dances. However, the nationalist undercurrents of *Matri Bhumi* also remind the dancer of India and thus relate her art to that specific nation. The dancer in the diaspora must once again be asked "to whom do you pay homage?" In this context, the *bhumi pranam* can be seen to parallel the *bhumi puja* (prayer) described by Shampa and Sanjoy Mazumdar in their study of the establishment of a Hindu temple in Southern California. In this ethnographic description, the two claim that it was through the *bhumi puja* that "a piece of American soil was symbolically purified (2006, 45)" and thus transformed into a Hindu space. They note that the prayers performed in this *puja* were significant in this imagined transformation for the recitations proclaimed: "let spirits (*bhuta*), gods (*deva*) and demons (*raksasa*) depart and seek other habitations. From now this place belongs to the divinity whose temple will be built here (ibid)." As a result of this *puja* and its role in the consecration of the temple, one type of space (American) could be re-defined and re-inhabited as another (Hindu). Recognising the interplay between nation, landscape and spirituality, it becomes apparent that this temple could not exist in America without a coherent image of India as the repository of Hindu identity. Similarly, the performance of Indian classical dance in the diaspora relies upon an assumed and codified *Bharata* in order to pay homage to *bhumi* more generally. Underlying the practice of the *bhumi pranam*, therefore, is the spatial context of (de)colonisation and *Bharata Mata*.

A spatial analysis of a unified and independent India brings together ideas often posited as disparate; the national is made spiritual and the spiritual made national. Like the spatial, the spiritual is produced and cannot be disassociated from the politics and implications of modernity. The nationalist appeal to an indigenous and spiritual Indian nation required the image of *Bharata Mata* in order to unite the nation and identify those who supposedly held legitimate claim to it. *Bharata Mata's* ability to make the nation indigenous, maternal and spiritual was thus crucial to the project of establishing Indian belonging. Rather than mark a simple reversion to an 'ancient' knowledge system, the contemporary ascription of *Bharata* to India demonstrates an interplay between tradition and modernity. While this binary was crucial for the colonial project, it was also assumed by the anti-colonial nationalists who often inverted its normative inscriptions. However, these nationalists also transcended this binary in their attempts to claim their independent subjectivities. The example of *Bharata Mata* demonstrates this complex relation and continues to have impact on contemporary practices such as the *bhumi pranam*, thus highlighting the co-productive natures of tradition and modernity. As will be seen, this relationship was particularly prevalent in the reconstruction of Indian classical dance, a project that revolved around the fetishisation of the *devadasi*.

FROM DASI TO DEVI:

The Devadasi and Colonial and Nationalist Fetishisms

Say that Indian dance (classical) is an image reflected in two mirrors opposite each other – the "East" and "West." As the image multiplies into variations of itself, it becomes impossible to determine which mirror it is in. When one image is exclusively selected, it usually reflects the perspective and the image of the one who is looking.

-Uttara Coorlawala, *Ruth St. Denis and India's Dance Renaissance*, 1992

Visions of black subalterns dance through our dreams, our literature, our arts, our sciences and our films, like Shirley Temple and Mr. Bojangles.

-Anthony Farley, *The Black Body as Fetish Object,* 1997

The figure of the *devadasi* is arguably one of the most strongly embedded and hotly contested images in the popular imaginary of (post)colonial India. The *devadasi* is also one of the most recognisable figures associated with India and its 'culture,' both in the colonial metropolis and the contemporary 'Western' world. Whether celebrated or maligned, the *devadasi* is seen to represent Orientalist visions of 'Eastern' sexuality, art (and/or its degradation) and custom. However, attempts to discern the *devadasi* are complicated by the catch-all nature of the term which encompasses temple dancers, courtesans, entertainers and prostitutes. Related to the temple for some and the brothel for others, the *devadasi* has personified both the sacred and the profane. Feminists have celebrated her liberated independence while nationalists have decried her fallen status; colonialists were initially enamoured of her exotic beauty and later scornful of what they perceived to be her unrefined art. What is more, others have brought attention to her victimisation, conceiving of the *devadasi* as a woman forced into a life of degradation and abuse. Each narrative, though different from the next, constructs the *devadasi* without actually engaging her specificity. Those who celebrate her independence forget that she still existed *within* a patriarchal system while those who scorn her do so through a discourse that, whether applied by coloniser or nationalist, reinscribes a colonial logic. These accounts of the *devadasi*, though branching in varying directions, come together to produce her as an object of fetishism.

To fetishise the *devadasi* is to endow her with certain characteristics that are naturalised to conceal the social relations of power that produced her. Sara Ahmed has built upon Marx's concept of commodification to advance her own ideas of 'stranger fetishism' and the 'fetishism of figures.' In *Capital*, Marx defined commodity fetishism

as the process through which material objects are accredited value without recognising the actual labour-power that produces them. It is through the process of commodification that the object is seen to have certain intrinsic properties. For Ahmed, Marx's theory suggests that fetishisation not only displaces the social relations of production but also transforms "fantasies into figures (2000, 5)." Ahmed expands upon this to explore the ways in which figures are produced with a 'life of their own,' effectively 'cut-off' from the histories that initially determined them (ibid). It is through this process that the stranger is already ontologised as *being* strange. For Ahmed, unravelling the social relations of this process is an important intervention in order to avoid stranger fetishism and its attendant exclusions. This practice of objectification is important for understanding the construction of the *devadasi*.

Like the veiled woman made synonymous with the 'Orient' (Yegenoglu, 1998), the *devadasi* in her many forms can be seen as a metonym for India. Those who perceived her as illicit saw in her an entire culture that had become degraded and profane. Many Orientalist thinkers believed India had fallen from the proverbial Golden Age (Mill, 1858; Dubois, 1879) and the state of the *devadasi* only supported this. Nationalist revivalists and artists alike also saw the *devadasi* as demonstrative of India's decline. To save India was to save it from the *devadasi*. This is evidenced by D.N. Patnaik, arguably the foremost historian of Odissi, one of the eight styles of contemporary Indian classical dance. According to Dr. Patnaik, until the mid-twentieth century revival of Odissi, the dance "in its degenerated form was confined with the Maharis (Devadasis) (1970, i)." In this summation, not only did the *devadasi* represent a degenerate art form – and by extension all that had degraded in Indian culture and society – she 'confined' it and thus

obstructed those who sought to redeem it. To rescue the *devadasi* was to save her from herself; it was also an attempt to salvage a 'degraded' India and facilitate the task of nation-building in the era of Independence.

A similar narrative of salvation is also articulated by those who celebrate the *devadasi* as independent and in control of her sexuality. As the *devadasi* was not married to any particular man (in the religious context, she was perceived to be married to the deity), she was arguably free from this form of patriarchal control and often in charge of her decisions and finances. Casting the *devadasi* as a predecessor to the modern liberated feminist, such a view seeks to restore her to her matriarchal heritage and power. According to this logic, the *devadasi* represents an enlightened India whose spirituality and traditions can compensate for some of the suffocating effects of Western modernity, with its high-speed impersonal interactions, lamented loss of tradition and history of discrimination. This is the same India to which Madonna appealed as she performed in the 1998 MTV Music Awards, singing Hindu verses in front of three Odissi dancers. This narrative also revolves around desire, not only for the *devadasi* but for all that India has to offer. This account is presented unabashedly by Frédérique Apffel Marglin who, in her seminal ethnography on the Maharis/*devadasis* of Orissa, claimed that "[t]hese views [that the *devadasis* were debased] never appeared convincing to me, even though I had at that time [at the onset of her study] no hard evidence to refute them except my love for the dance in which I saw a harmonious blend of eroticism and spiritual devotion which seemed thoroughly in keeping with ancient Indian traditions (1985, 9)." According to Marglin, the *devadasi*, like the ancient traditions of India, needed to be salvaged from those who wrongly condemned her. As a Western ethnographer capable of 'serious'

research, Marglin saw in herself the authority to discount the opinions of others – including her dance teachers in Delhi – despite the fact that she had 'no hard evidence to refute them.' For Marglin, redeeming the *devadasi* was an exercise in liberating the universal woman; the temple dancer was made into the archetypal figure of the sexual revolution[5].

As Derek Hook (2006) has argued, desire - like fantasy, anxiety and deep-set fear - is discursively produced and requires socio-historical contextualisation. Furthermore, Hook maintains that the concept of desire can be a productive way in which to explain social relations of power (2006, 214). This is especially pertinent to the colonial project; as Meyda Yegenoglu maintains, "the subject of colonial discourse is constituted simultaneously in the field of a *disciplinary form of power* ... and of *fantasy* (1998, 27 - italics in original)." According to Yegenoglu, fetishism relates to a "contradictory belief structure" that is "always characterised by an ambiguity or ambivalence, by a productive tension that results from the simultaneous recognition *and* refusal of difference (1997, 28 - emphasis added)." This ambiguity is deeply intertwined with fantasy and desire, making the fetishisation of the *devadasi* all the more complex and enmeshed in the nation-building project. As Joseph Massad has observed in regards to Arab nationalism, a tug-of-war between an insistence on difference and a desire to assimilate into white hegemony is a common characteristic of all colonised peoples (2007, 15). The *devadasi*, who once represented a glorious artistic and spiritual culture but had become corrupted

[5] Indeed, the final section of Marglin's conclusion is titled 'Implications for the Understanding of Women.' In her analysis, Marglin suggests that the Hindu concept of pure/impure be exchanged for the more general categories of auspicious/inauspicious. For example, she suggests that while a menstruating woman may be considered impure in Hindu belief, she is nonetheless regarded as auspicious for her menstruation confirms her ability to have children. It is thus through the auspicious/inauspicious dichotomy that Marglin appropriates Hindu 'tradition' to celebrate/liberate the universal woman.

by time, presented nationalists with ambivalence and desire for the glories of the past and the promises of the future. She represented both similarity and difference, a complication that could be overcome by adopting the language of modernity. By relegating the *devadasi* to the past, Indian nationalists could claim cultural and artistic authenticity in the present.

In order to understand the various fantasies and ambiguities that circumscribed the *devadasi*, she must be situated within the social, historical and political contexts of both British colonialism and Indian nationalism. Despite its connoted antiquity, the generalised term *devadasi* gained currency during the era of colonialism (Vijaisri 2004, 1). Before this, there were many categories of women who found mention in numerous texts and were distinguished from one another in terms of their status and relation to prostitution. It was during the colonial era that the term *devadasi* was applied to these various women, thus complicating an attempt to understand their particular subjectivities.[6] Subsumed into an "Orientalist representation of a 'pan Indian transhistorical'" category, the archetypal *devadasi* has been inserted into a history described as "a linear deterioration of aesthetic quality and personal agency, from temple to courts and from courts to streets and to (deserved) abandonment from where the dancer and the dance must be rescued (Coorlawala 2004,50)." As a temple dancer, the *devadasi* was highly trained in dance, scripture, music and religious ritual (Roy, 1994; Coorlawala, 2004). She was believed to be married to the deity, often represented by priest or king, and was provided for by the temple. Her association to this religious institution has been

[6] For the purposes of this paper, the term *devadasi* will be used to refer to this broad group of women. Where necessary, distinctions will be made between *devadasi*/temple dancers and *devadasi*/courtesans. The former will refer to those women who danced in the temple as part of ritual practice while the latter will refer to those women who danced outside of the temple.

recorded in Kashmir, Bengal, Orissa, Saurastra, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra, Mysore, Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Patnaik 1970, 35-6). In Orissa, the practice of dedicating 'dancing-girls' to the temple is said to date back at least twelve centuries (ibid). At about the same time, pilgrim Huein Tsang recorded a large number of dancing women associated with the Sun Temple in Multan in the seventh century (Nevile 1996, 21). Such historical records would become important in later attempts to 'purify' the *devadasi's* dance for they suggested an ancient 'tradition' that had not yet become 'degraded' and to which the dance could supposedly be returned.

As there are no known references to temple dancing in the oldest books on dance theory, the *Natya Shastra* and the *Abhinaya Darpana* (Spivak 1991, 248), temple inscriptions have been relied upon to testify to the consecration of temple dancers (Patnaik 1970, 36). By contrast, the figure of the courtesan does find mention in these earlier texts. For example, the *Kamasutra* (approximately 100 CE) states that "a courtesan of pleasant disposition, beautiful and otherwise attractive, who has mastered the arts...has a right to a seat of honour among men. She will be honoured by the king and praised by the learned, and all will seek her favours and treat her with consideration (cited in Basham 1954, 183-184)." Although the conflation of the *devadasi* with the courtesan of these texts can be seen as the result of linguistic limitations (translations of these ancient texts use the English term courtesan), it has nonetheless had real implications for these women and their subsequent representations.

Many of these early texts presented the *devadasi*/courtesan as a figure of reverence. According to Pran Nevile, "she was treated as an ornament of civic life- that lovely scented flower that the city puts in its hair for all to see (1996, 24)." Furthermore,

it has also been suggested that the courtesan dancer enjoyed a history as long as or longer than the temple dancer. For example, evidence of courtesan dancers was revealed at the archaeological site of Mohenjo-Daro, the legendary society that was well established by the fourth millennium BCE. Though controversial by the nineteenth century, the courtesan was still revered in some arenas where it was suggested that she also had the ability to bestow prestige upon the men who frequented her simply through her power of association (Oldenburg, 1992).

To return to the *devadasi*/temple dancer, Gayatri Spivak has observed that temple dancing was first mentioned in a medieval collection of stories known as *Kathasaritsagara* (1991, 249). According to conventional historical narratives, the temple dancer was originally a devout participant in temple ritual, pure in her duties and intentions. That the early *devadasis* were venerated by many people - both colonial officials and Indian subjects – is demonstrated by a fourteenth-century painting that depicts the *devadasis* described in the travel accounts of Marco Polo as "blonde nuns attired in flowing habits (Metcalf 1995, 5)." This surprising comparison suggests that *devadasis* were in fact perceived (at least by some) as legitimate members of the religious institution whose association to the deity was akin to a Christian nun's covenant with God. It was from this sacred position that the *devadasi* was assumed to have regressed.

The conflation of the *devadasi* with prostitution appears to have been strengthened in the later part of the colonial era for there is little evidence to suggest that her sexual relationships were of main concern prior to this time. Associated with the temple or the bazaar, identified as *dasi* or prostitute, the women who were associated with the *devadasi* were overwhelmingly maligned in many urban centres of India by the

late nineteenth century. The first concrete attempt to tackle the prevalence of *nautch*-dancing was initiated by Viresalingam in 1881 and received impetus by both "missionary and Hindu cooperation (cited in Vijaisri 2004, 145)." Viresalingam's memorandum, circulated in 1893, would become the basis for the anti-*nautch* movement and is worth quoting at length:

> The humble memorial of the undersigned members of the 'Hindu Social Reformer Association' of Madras, and others most respectfully sheweth:
>
> 1. That there exists in the Indian community a class of women commonly known as *nautch* girls.
>
> 2. That these women are invariably prostitutes.
>
> 3. That countenance and encouragement are given to them, and even a recognised status in society secured to them, by the practice which prevails among Hindus, to a very undesirable extent, of inviting them to take part in marriage and other festivities, and even to entertainments given in honour of guests who are not Hindus.
>
> 4. That this practice not only necessarily lowers the moral tone of society, but also tends to destroy that family life on which national soundness depends, and tends to bring upon individuals ruin in property and character alike.
>
> 5. That this practice rests only upon fashion, and receives no authority from antiquity or religion, and accordingly has no claim to be considered a National Institution, and is entitled to no respect as such.
>
> 6. That a strong feeling is springing up among the educated classes of this country against the prevalence of this practice...
>
> 7. That so keenly do your Memorialists realise the harmful and degrading character of this practice that they have resolved neither to invite *nautch* girls to any entertainments given by themselves, nor to accept any invitation to an entertainment at which it is known that *nautch* girls are to be present.

8. That your Memorialists feel assured that your Excellency desires to aid, by every poor means, those who labour to remove any form of social evil.

9. That your Memorialists accordingly appeal to your Excellency, as the official and recognised head of society in the Presidency of Madras, and as the representative of Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen-Empress, in whose influence and example the cause of purity has ever found support, to discourage this pernicious practice by declining to attend any entertainment at which *nautch* girls are invited to perform, and thus to strengthen the hands of those who are trying to purify the social life of their community .

(cited in Vijaisri 2004, 145-6)

Although this memorandum did not meet with initial success, it provides insight into the reformist ideas in circulation at that time. As this document indicates, the initiatives of the anti-*nautch* movement were squarely situated within a modern project of liberalisation. This is particularly evident in articles 4 and 6, which stress individual and national honour, private property and 'proper' education in opposition to this 'depraved' custom. Furthermore, article 5 of the memorandum attempts to disassociate this practice from the authority of Indian 'antiquity' and 'tradition,' a project that parallels the 'modern discourse on tradition' that was integral to the larger nationalist project (Chatterjee, 1999; Mani, 1999).

While members of the colonial government took an official position of non-involvement, with some citing their own attendance at such performances to claim that *nautch* was not as bad as this account suggested, there was an outcry against Indian *nautch* practice in Britain. The 1890s was thus marked by a volatile tension between the imperial state and the colonial government as missionaries, abolitionists, feminists, parliamentarians and temperance unions in the metropolis were especially vocal in their opposition to this 'vulgar' practice (Vijaisri 2004, 148). It can therefore be inferred that,

by the late nineteenth century, the *devadasi* was as fetishised in England as she was in India. This is corroborated by an analysis of the European operas and ballets produced during this time, which will be addressed later.

Although more attempts were made to end *nautch* dancing in India throughout the nineteenth century, it wasn't until after Independence that the Devadasi Prevention of Dedication Act was passed in 1947. Applicable to the entire Madras presidency, this Act was particularly significant as South India was a region in which the *devadasi*/temple dancer was especially prevalent. According to this legislation, any dance done by a woman "...in the precincts of any temple or other religious institution, or in any procession of a Hindu deity, idol or object of worship installed in any such temple or institution or at any festival or ceremony held in respect of such a deity, idol or object of worship [was] unlawful (Madras Act of 1947, section 3.3)." The fact that this Act was made to apply both inside and outside the temple indicates the ambiguity that surrounded the *devadasi* figure. Similar legislation had been passed in Mysore (1910), Travancore (1930) and Bombay (1934), but these did not carry the same weight as the Madras Act of 1947; unlike the Madras presidency, Mysore and Travancore were princely states while Bombay did not have as prevalent a *devadasi* presence, which resulted in an Act that was more general in its terms.

In analysing these pieces of legislation, it is imperative to address their implications for the women they targeted. Despite their appeal to narratives of salvation, these Acts reinforced the patriarchal script that would once more subjugate the *devadasi.* For example, reformists appealed to the men of *devadasi* communities in order to garner support to pass The Madras Hindu Religious Endowment Act in 1926, which was

amended in 1929. In an attempt to discourage the dedication of girls to the temple, this Act sought to 'free' the lands from the temple and give ownership directly to the *devadasis*. It was hoped that overriding the temple in such a way would minimise the incentive of land title and thus decrease the number of girls that would be dedicated to temple. However, this Act did not apply to all temples in the region and was aimed at specific types of *devadasis*, particularly the *Sules* and the *Sanis* who were ritually and economically structured within the temple (Vijaisri 2004, 246). This amendment was mostly supported by the men in the *devadasi* community as it would grant them access to the land in ways that would not have been previously possible. Recognising that men and women participated in the *devadasi* system (all of the musical accompanists were men), the petition for the amendment stated that "while the lands in the name of men or in the name of men and women co-jointly are not enfranchised, the trustees of the temple insist on the services being performed by men, [and that] the men have to hire or buy and keep women ready to render the services in order to enjoy the lands (cited in Vijaisri 2004, 247)." The petition suggested that, if the government did not accommodate this by placing certain men in charge of the land and the *devadasis* that lived on it, the "innocent" *devadasis* who had been saved from 'demeaning' temple service would "once again become victims to the system in a more dangerous manner, as they [would] become the tools of [non *devadasi*] men (ibid)." Therefore, certain ('good') men were made responsible for the *devadasi* who was meant to be rescued from other ('bad') men. Made to depend on men either way, the *devadasi* was once again subsumed into the fold of patriarchy as a result of this petition. As Vijaisri summarises, this amendment "morally elevated the male to a higher plane and legitimised their [sic] superiority and crucial role

in the amelioration of the moral, material standards of the sacred prostitutes (2004, 247)." Any autonomy that the *devadasi* may have enjoyed within her community was reversed for the men of this group were placed ever more firmly in the role of the patriarch.

Patriarchal control was similarly re-inscribed in later legislation. For example, in addition to establishing a punishment of Rs. 500 and/or 6 months of imprisonment, the Madras Act also stated that "a woman of that community who gives or takes part in any melam (*nautch*), dancing or music performance in the course of any procession or otherwise is thereby regarded as having adopted a life of prostitution and becomes incapable of entering into a valid marriage (Madras Act of 1947, section 3.2)." Originally perceived to be threatening due to her unmarried status, the *devadasi* (or the woman accused of being a *devadasi*) was now deemed undeserving of the normative institution of marriage that too often determines a woman's status in patriarchal society and grants her access to legitimate forms of sexuality. Furthermore, the more recent Acts of 1981 in Karnataka and 1988 in Andra Pradesh demonstrate the extent to which such opinions circulated around heteronormative gender roles. That these Acts were only applied to women and not, for example, hermaphrodites or eunuchs (Vijaisri 2004, 253) is revealing. The nationalist concern over the heterosexual woman illustrated in these Acts reveals the extent to which the *devadasi* had to be brought under the heteronormative control of patriarchy. The woman's productive role in the nation is once again seen to take centre-stage.

The impetus that drove the anti-*nautch* movement and subsequent attempts to reconstruct the dance was embedded within larger anticolonial nationalist efforts to revitalise Indian 'traditions'. Like the conventional story of the *devadasi*, these nationalist

attitudes assumed that India was a land that had been corrupted by time. While efforts to return this lost glory to India remained a central aspect of Indian nationalism, this was pursued as part of the modernising project. This is particularly evidenced by Jawaharlal Nehru who embraced the liberal ideals of universal rights, liberties and citizenship while simultaneously insisting that Indian 'traditions' be maintained. Nehru qualified his definition of tradition by distinguishing between those that were 'dead' and those that constituted a 'life-giving force.' In his writings, Nehru is particularly concerned that, "[i]f India forgets [the past], she will no longer remain India and much that has made her our joy and pride will cease to be. It is not this we have to break with, but all the dust and dirt of ages that have covered her up and hidden her inner beauty and significance, the excrescences and abortions that have twisted and petrified her spirit, set in rigid frames and stunted her growth (1946, 387-388)." Such attempts to clear the 'dust and dirt' that hid India's glory resonated with efforts to salvage the dance(s) from the *devadasi* in order to reconstitute it as a 'classical' artistic tradition.

Attempts to disassociate the dance from the *devadasi* were in full force well before the passing of the Madras Act of 1947. In 1926, E Krishna Iyer began presenting his now famous performance of *sadir*, the form of temple dance prevalent in South India and commonly perceived to be the precursor to contemporary Bharatanatyam. Iyer's performance was especially controversial for it was presented at the Music Academy which was (and still is) considered to be an institution of 'high' art, something with which dance was not associated at that time (Coorlawala 2004, 52). In an attempt to remove the stigma associated with the dance, Iyer dressed as a woman to draw attention to the merits of the art in a way that would not be distracted by the 'profane' sexuality of

the *devadasi* (Kothari, 1979). This performance prompted an historic debate in legislative circles as well as the local media about the generations of aesthetic tradition and knowledge that would be lost if morality and art were to be conflated. According to Coorlawala, Iyer's attempt to salvage the dance itself and bring it into propriety suggested the 'morals' of the *devadasi* were assumed to be beyond defence (2004, 52). Iyer and his colleagues were not interested in engaging with the *devadasi* and did not even consider the validity of the charges laid against her; their concern was for the dance and its purification alone.

The (re)establishment of 'classical' Bharatanatyam is commonly associated with Rukmini Devi Arundale, who is credited with empowering 'proper' women to dance by restoring the respectability of the art form. In order to disassociate the dance from the stigma of its original practitioners, she renamed the *sadir attam* of the Southern *devadasis* 'Bharata Natyam'. According to Devi, 'Bharata Natyam' was the quintessential dance of India described in the *Natyashastra* and other styles of dance were simply sub-variants of it (1979, 13)[7]. Her choice of name supported this assertion as the term Bharata Natyam alluded to the Sanskrit term applied to India; the link between the dance and the nation was made all the more strongly. Encouraged to learn more about Indian dance by Russian ballerina Anna Pavalova in 1928, Devi believed that the issues raised by the 19th century anti-*nautch* movement could be resolved by purging the dance of its sexual/sensual characteristics (Coorlawala 2004, 55). As a result, Bharatanatyam became respectable for Indian women of the middle and upper classes to learn and perform. Devi's approach to

[7]This term was changed to Bharatanatyam as other dance styles were classicized. While the term Bharata Natyam alluded to Devi's contention that the dance was *the* Indian dance of the Sanskrit text, the revised term Bharatanatyam was an attempt to move away from this conflation and acknowledge this dance as one amongst several regional styles.

the dance therefore suggested a convergence between Western perceptions of India on the one hand and Indian attempts to reclaim the past on the other. As was made evident in the dance, this convergence had to balance Orientalist perceptions of the 'East' with the purity of 'classical' art.

According to Pallabi Chakravorty, Devi's background as the daughter of an upper class Brahmin family and the wife of Theosophist professor George Arundale "represented the ideal confluence of the ritual traditions of ancient India and the emancipated sensibilities of a Western-educated, upper-middle-class woman (2000/2001, 112)." Although she presented Bharatanatyam as a traditionally Indian dance, Devi also appealed to a universal notion of womanhood. Her approach to the dance was likely influenced by the Theosophist World Mother Movement that she had already assisted in spearheading by the time she began her Bharatanatyam training. For Devi, the dance was about "the woman as she was in ancient India, not as she is today, the woman who was the warrior, the true mother, the priestess, the ideal for the world (cited in Chakravorty 2006, 112; Coorlawala 2004, 57)." This statement is indicative of Devi's simultaneous gesture to the local *and* the universal. Her 'ideal' woman 'for the world' recalls Frédérique Marglin (1985), cited earlier. While the latter was more forgiving of the *devadasi*, both Marglin and Devi overdetermined her to represent all women. Their privileged postitionalities reflect the power that enables one to essentialise categories such as 'woman.' As the historical trajectory of the *devadasi* suggests, this essentialistion has very real impact on the lives of subalterns. In making the dance 'proper' for the universal woman, the material conditions of the *devadasi*'s subordination remain ignored.

Another outcome of Devi's 'traditionally' Indian yet universally 'modern' approach is evident in her establishment of the Kalakeshetra School, which is credited with creating a codified Bharatanatyam prospectus. According to this curriculum, contemporary Bharatanatyam should be characterised by its complex footwork, intricate hand gestures and various facial expressions, all of which are accompanied with little to no torso movement. While this abbreviated movement of the torso can be understood as the result of fast and intricate footwork, it also reduces the sensual appearance of the dance thus signalling "middleclass housewifery respectability (Coorlawala 2004, 56)." In order to achieve this aim, the movement of certain parts of the body must be contained in order to preserve the 'classical' refinement of the dance. Another example of limiting body movement to maintain the dance's 'classical' status is demonstrated by the Odissi revivalists who disagreed over whether or not the hip should be used while dancing (Pathy, 2007). Although the temple sculptures that were consulted during the reconstruction of the dance showed many postures in which the hip was deflected, these did not indicate whether the hips moved as the dancer transitioned from one pose to the next. While Guru Pankaj Charan Das argued that hip movement should be included as part of the Odissi vocabulary as this is how the original *maharis/devadasis* danced (he came from a *mahari* family), others such as Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra staunchly disagreed, claiming that this would retract from the 'classical' nature of the dance (Roy, 1994). Today, the school of Odissi established by Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra is widely recognised as the mainstream style of Odissi and contemporary dancers within this tradition have limited the use of the hip to an even greater degree.

The discipline of the body that is required to learn to dance without the torso or the hip is one instance in which an entire history of colonialism, power and normative propriety is inscribed on the modern dancer. Michel Foucault has argued that the body should be seen as "the inscribed surface of events (cited in Mills 2003, 83)" referring to the ways in which "political events and decisions have material effects upon the body (ibid)." This brings attention to the ways in which power is memorialised on the body (Mbembe, 2004) and suggests that the very ways in which these dances were (re)produced and performed were deeply influenced by their social and political contexts. The bodily discipline of the dancer is also a way in which the 'impropriety' of the *devadasi* (who moved her hip and torso) is (re)confirmed.

Like Iyer, Devi conceived of the *devadasi* as inherently degraded, recalling Ahmed's 'fetishism of figures' and their purportedly intrinsic qualities. Ironically, in order to retain the spiritual aspect of the dance in the present, it had to be disassociated from the woman who arguably maintained its spiritual heritage in the past - the *devadasi* who practiced it as part of temple ritual. Devi's reinterpretation of the dance signified a modern (re)production of an 'ancient' spirituality. Rather than recognise its contemporary construction, Devi argued that this spirituality was in fact consonant with 'true' Indian tradition. However, the modern spirituality that she and others inserted into the dance can be seen as a reflection of India's fantasised past. While the *devadasi* was condemned as utterly sinful, her artistic practices were revived and legitimised as repositories of spirituality. Appealing to the feminine power and purity of the Mother Goddess (*Devi*)

through the dance was one way to distinguish the profane *devadasi* from the sacred art that was reinstated. The 'modern' dancer replaced the *dasi* by embodying the *Devi*[8].

Just as the degradation of the *devadasi* can be attributed to colonisers and nationalist elites, the project of revitalising the dances of India cannot be seen to rest with Indians alone. American dancer Ruth St. Denis has been celebrated by Indians and Westerners alike for regenerating interest in Indian dance. According to Olivia Whitmer, St. Denis took interest in Indian dance after attending a Coney Island exhibit that inspired her to "improvise what she imagined to be the original action she saw represented in pictures of sculptures and other art objects of ancient India (2004, 498)." Her performances included provocative 'Eastern' costumes and bronze-tint make-up, illustrating a lavish Orientalist fantasy. Appealing to India's exotic sensuality by presenting herself as 'Indian' on stage, St. Denis found the freedom to express herself and her sexuality through the 'East' without relinquishing the privilege of propriety that accompanied her identity as a white woman. She could thus perform both the role of a white woman and a brown heroine without worrying about authenticity or legitimacy. This is apparent in Deborah Jowitt's description of one of St. Denis' performances:

> In the first verse, Radha languishes while Krishna dances with five gopis, each of whom represents one of the senses. As she later admitted, St. Denis, intent on creating a lofty, satisfyingly exotic theatrical persona for herself, laid her Hindu dance-drama in a Jain temple and substituted Buddhist notions of renunciation for the erotic union of Radha and Krishna. She *knew* the East in her soul and didn't vex her nascent choreographic powers with questions of authenticity. "I did not go to India," she remarked grandly, "India came to me" (1988, 131).

[8] The term *devadasi* literally means servant (*dasi*) of God. The term *Devi* is used for the Mother Goddess, notably Durga, Lakshmi and Parvati. While the former has come to connote degradation and profanity, the latter suggests purity and sacredness. That the idea of Devi implies purity is further indicated by the fact that it was quite popular for dancers to take on the name Devi, as was done by dancers such as Rukmini Devi and Sitara Devi. For more, see Coorlawala, 2004.

Unlike the *devadasi* that she wished to embody, St. Denis was able to determine her subjectivity according to her own desires. She had the power to create a 'persona' for herself that was informed by the very Orientalist fantasies that had been in circulation for centuries and that had converged over the *devadasi* with significant consequences. St. Denis' 'knowledge' of India was secured by the colonial encounter that preceded her. The pleasure that she experienced on stage was not limited to the performance experience but was informed by something deeper, what Anthony Farley (1997) has referred to as 'race pleasure.' As Farley maintains"[t]he image of the black is ubiquitous. Whites return and return and return again to this fetish in order to satisfy a self-created urge to be white. The satisfaction of this will-to-whiteness is a form of pleasure in and about one's body. It is a pleasure which is satisfied through the production, circulation, and consumption of images of the not-white (1997, 464)." For St. Denis, the *devadasi* was fetishised in order to be desired and consumed.

Reviving the dance's popularity and prestige is thus seen as an example of the contrapuntal partnership between 'East' and 'West' that is characteristic of Orientalism (Said, 1993). Analysing the reconstruction of Bharatanatyam through Richard Schechner's theory of restored behaviour, Whitmer observes that both "Rukmini Devi and St. Denis were surrounded by the popular media of America and Europe that portrayed the East as primitive, exotic and often as a mute visual spectacle (2004, 497)." Yet Whitmer fails to recognise the differential power relations that existed in this reconstructive project, power relations that can and must be traced to the colonial encounter. Whitmer concludes by arguing that:

> "while St. Denis used Indian dance as a source of freedom for women, Rukmini Devi and the founders of *Bharatanatyam* applied Victorian morals to the once highly sexual *sadir* of the *devadasis*... By stereotyping the *devadasi* as prostitutes, Devi and the Indian dance revivalists of the early twentieth century performed an act similar to that of Ruth St. Denis. They appropriated dance practices that were not their own and altered them to suit their needs (2004, 502-3 - italics in original).

This statement is problematic for several reasons. First, it once again presupposes the universal woman that is waiting to be liberated through artistic expression even though it ignores Devi's contribution to this projection. Further, St. Denis is presented as the free-spirited, bohemian artist while Rukmini Devi is cast as the puritanical 'native' that imitates Victorian morality. While both women did appropriate the dance to suit their individual needs, these endeavours cannot be regarded as equal given the context of the colonial relationship. To suggest that both women were (un)related to the dance in similar ways is to deny the fact that St. Denis travelled to India in order to know herself as a liberated woman. In doing so, she reduced and appropriated the culture, practices and history of a land to which she had no claim. The extent of St. Denis' privilege to 'not vex her nascent choreographic powers with questions of authenticity' is contextualised by Radhika Mohanram's assertion that whiteness is the right to mobility (Mohanram 1999, 7-18). This is not to deny that Rukmini Devi did appropriate the dance to suit her upper class needs or that her interests in the dance were the result of transnational connections with non-Indian dancers. Rather, it is to highlight the very impossibility of Rukmini Devi travelling to the West in order to authoritatively define and alter the course of Western artistic traditions. It is true that both St. Denis and Rukmini Devi were situated in the same colonial discursive field and contributed to the (re)invention of the Bharatanatyam 'tradition'; however their coordinates on this field cannot be seen to be the same.

The fetishisation of the *devadasi* was well established in the West by the time St. Denis entered the stage. According to Jowitt, most Asian literature had been translated for Europe by the mid-nineteenth century (1988, 50) - the same time that tensions surrounding the initial anti-*nautch* movement were brewing between metropolis and colony. These literary pieces were then adapted for the operas and ballets of Europe. The figure of the 'temple dancer' was regularly featured on stage and was even added to enliven those scripts that did not originally include her[9]. Even Karl Marx's 1853 essay *On Imperialism in India* made reference to "the religion...of the Bayadere (653)", a term for the 'temple dancer' that would be popularised by the 1877 ballet *La Bayadère*. These various ballets and operas cannot be separated from the historical experience of colonial domination. As Said has noted in his study of European operas and their Orientalist/stereotypical representations of the colonies, "the malleability and transportability of secondary or lesser cultures was underlined. These subaltern cultures were exhibited before Westerners as microcosms of the larger imperial domain. Little, if any allowance was made for the non-European except within this framework (1993, 112)." The performances described by Jowitt therefore served to 'educate' European audiences about the marvels of the 'East'; they also provided the reference point against which Europeans could judge their presumably superior sense of morality and culture. It was through such performances that Europeans could know themselves. The fetishisation of the *devadasi* was thus instrumental in the formation of white subjectivity.

Analysing the representation of the *devadasi* in these operas and plays, Jowitt has observed that the drama and passion attributed to this exotic figure were deemed inappropriate for a 'proper' European 'lady' (1988, 56). The exoticism and passionate

[9] For example, Gautier's *Sacountala* (see Jowitt 1988, 54).

thrill associated with the *devadasi* was evident in a critic's review of the 1868 ballet *Brahma*; describing the protagonist, the critic stated that "the fierce, expressive eyes that shine like rubies in the dark, the sculptured pose of the body, the imperiously regal gesture transport the spectator into the azure regions of the ideal, into a fairyland among the passionate sultanas of the Thousand and One Nights (cited in Jowitt 1988, 55-6)." For this critic, India is the same as a fairyland which is the same as Scheherazade's Arabia; all three constitute an exotic fantasy of the Orient.

Furthermore, just as Europeans came to know their identity against the traditions and cultures of the colonies (which included the *devadasi*), men (both Indian and European) came to know themselves as masculine through the figure of the *devadasi*. For example, it has been argued that the bold and passionate *devadasi* character of the European ballets was not a threat but a compliment to the masculinity of the male protagonist. As Jowitt suggests, "that a woman so potent [as the *devadasi* character] would inevitably submit to a man's domination added to the man's own strength (1988, 58)." Similarly, Spivak argues that the *devadasi* is a "medium of the male agent's self recognition (1991, 261)" subject to patriarchy just as the capitalist is subject to capital (1991, 253). It cannot be forgotten that the actual *devadasi* lived within a patriarchal system, even if she personified its limits. As the *devadasi*/courtesan was presumably independent of a particular man, she did not have to answer to the 'normal' expectations imposed upon other women in this patriarchal setting; and yet the courtesan catered to the very patriarchal society that she arguably resisted (Oldenburg 1992, 26). The *devadasi* can therefore be regarded as both the product and perpetuator of patriarchy.

It was thus through and against the fetishised figure of the *devadasi* that Indians and Europeans were able to know themselves as moral, modern Subjects. This knowledge was premised upon the binary distinction of tradition and modernity, a binary that is necessarily racialised. By relegating the corrupt *devadasi* to the past, Indian dancers in the present could secure their cultural and artistic authenticity as well as avoid any ambivalence that might be represented by the *devadasi*. Furthermore, the very nation that was celebrated could be embodied through the performance of this 'pure' form of classical dance. However, given the nature of the nationalist movement, the *devadasi* could not be confined to the distant past, seen as the repository of 'true' tradition. Her fault lay in the fact that she had deviated from tradition, that she was not 'traditional' enough. And yet, while the project of reforming the *devadasi* appealed to an Indian antiquity, it was simultaneously implicated in the process of modernisation, therefore suggesting that the two – modernity and tradition – cannot be analysed as mutually exclusive. The tradition/modernity dyad put into effect a standard of national belonging that denied the *devadasi* the glories of Indian nationhood. As the next chapter will discuss, this binary distinction serves a similar function even when taken out of the Indian context and expanded to the transnational circumstances of contemporary multiculturalism.

ENDURING REPRESENTATIONS:

Colonialism, Culture and Multiculturalism

...as the focus shifts from processes of exclusion and marginalization to ethnic identities and their lack of adaptiveness, it is forgotten that these officially multicultural ethnicities, so embraced or rejected, are themselves the constructs of colonial – orientalist and racist – discourses.

-Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation,* 2000

The programme cover for the 2007 Thirtieth Anniversary Season of Dance Works, an organisation that describes itself as "Toronto's leading presenter of Canada's independent artists," seeks to present Canadian artistic developments as innovative and enlivening. Protruding from the bottom right corner of the page is a foot, sole turned up, caught in the act of what is assumed to be a magnificent leap. Further up the page, a hand appears palm-down, mirroring the foot. It is slightly blurred, indicating active motion. Upon closer inspection, the hand looks as though it might belong to a man. The leap, it seems, must be quite extraordinary if these two appendages are to meet as they do; one can imagine the off-page dancer arching his back to an immense degree as he flies through the air. The muted quality of the image against a black backdrop is supplemented by the striking focal point in the centre of the page - a flash of red that floats between hand and foot. At first the crimson material, embroidered with delicate flowers of pink and purple, lends beauty to the image. Its elegant design and vibrant colour accent the more demure tone that characterises the rest of the cover. After the image is finally absorbed in its entirety, its individual components become more distinguishable from one another – the flash of red is revealed to be a lotus shoe used in nineteenth-century practices of foot binding in China.

What makes this image interesting is the ways in which it brings together diverging ideas of art, gender, culture and time. The white male hand stands in stark contrast to the image of the Chinese woman that the lotus shoe invokes. While he is free to leap through the air and express himself artistically, she remains constrained by the patriarchal culture that bound her feet. She is the ghost of an image, represented only by an accessory. The man's dance is modern in its abstract leaps; the woman remains

trapped in antiquity. He can dance while she can barely walk. The text below the image informs the audience that it is "...defining dance for our times."

This programme cover speaks to a number of attributes valued by Canadian multiculturalism. Unity is suggested by the use of the term 'our.' What is more, this 'our' is granted a subjectivity made possible by its ability to 'define' its values, artistically and culturally. The statement suggests an agency not attributed to the wearers of the lotus shoe. Further, the need to 'define' dance suggests that this Other culture, though colourful, is in complete opposition to 'our' own. While the shoe makes reference to an ancient China, it simultaneously stands to represent all cultures that fit under the rubric of multiculturalism. These cultures are seen to be suspended in antiquity while Canada dynamically shapes its 'times'.

Like the lotus shoe, the contemporary Indian classical dancer is also called upon to define the boundaries of the modern 'multicultural' nation and its attendant rights of citizenship and national belonging. Limited representations of this dancer and her art confine her to an anachronistic time and space; the dancer is too often seen as traditional, her art ancient and her customs foreign. Rather than interact with her changing identity or political history, contemporary society engages her solely on the superficial terrain of 'song and dance' multiculturalism. In an attempt to gain inclusion into the multicultural society, the dancer is in fact excluded by the very thing that shapes her essentialised identity and allows her to participate in this social order; while her dance makes her temporarily appreciable by the mainstream, it simultaneously marks her as culturally, temporally and even racially different. Without questioning this contradiction, 'multicultural' performances of Indian classical dance can only further this project of

exclusion. In order to challenge these denials of national belonging and claims to full citizenship, the social and political function of multiculturalism must be deconstructed. Dependent upon the very (manufactured) notions of tradition and modernity that proved central to the logic of colonialism, the contemporary situation suggests that the earlier relationship between colony and metropole continues in the current form of 'ethnic' cultures and their relation to multicultural society. Again, the dancer is called upon only to be excluded, celebrated and yet demeaned once more.

The deployment of temporality, a shuttling between past and present, mobilises and sustains essentialised notions of particular cultures that are central to ideas of Canadian multiculturalism. With its reliance on particular ideas of temporality, multiculturalism must be situated within the larger historical and social contexts in which it occurs. An analysis of these contexts reveals a genealogy of cultural practices and representations consonant with those developed in Europe's colonial encounters with the Other cultures of the world. In order to understand the roles of various cultures in shaping multiculturalism in Western societies, it is imperative to understand their roots in the (post)colonial politics and societies from which they originate. Using the example of sati, this chapter analyses the South Asian diasporic community as an extension of the British colonisation of India in order to explore the continuing parallels and interactions between colonial imagination and multicultural representation. As the example of sati demonstrates, this was an issue that brought together assumed notions of Indian custom, law and religion - notions that remain in circulation today. This genealogy of colonialism to multiculturalism must be recognised in order to locate the contemporary position and productive function of Indian classical dance in a multicultural society. Although the

spatial context has changed, the same temporal questions remain, once again creating a standard of national belonging.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said discussed the importance of cultural expressions such as literary novels and theatrical performances in sustaining the colonial projects of their producers. According to him, such forms of production, whether directly referring to European colonialism or not, continually reaffirmed and legitimated the power of Empire. For Said, imperialism was as much an appropriation of specific historical moments as it was a seizure of actual territorial space. This is evidenced in the various appeals made by imperial powers to the ancient pasts of the societies that they colonised in an effort to make the latter more intelligible and thus governable. For example, in order to establish control in India and implement their version of 'indigenous' law, the British first had to imagine an ancient and timeless set of traditions and customs native to the land they sought to rule (Metcalf, 1995). The notion of an ancient and ideal Indian culture – from which Indians supposedly fell into degradation and to which they needed to be restored – created the problematic assertion of India as static. Such stasis was not, however, attributed to the British.

The writings of many liberal and Enlightenment philosophers of the eighteenth century on colonialism and India reveal the extent to which India's dynamic and diverse customs, cultures and histories were perceived to be homogeneous and unchanging by the British. Many early Orientalists maintained that India was once a land of glory similar to ancient Greece or Rome and argued that it had become degraded by the time the British had arrived in the 17th century (Cohn, 1996). In their conceptualisation, India's past and present were assumed to be unvarying and separable. Such opinions contributed to the

idea of India as static. These writers did not recognise the irony of their arguments which, by suggesting the degradation of Indian culture, nonetheless attributed it an element of dynamism; the ability to become degraded necessarily implied change. However, this dynamism was not enough to deter such thinkers as Sir William Jones and Edmund Burke from repeatedly referring to the Golden Age of Indian antiquity. For these thinkers, India's past and present, although completely different in terms of their evaluation, were both imagined as static. So powerful was this assumption of India as invariable, opponents to Jones and Burke were equally incapable of attributing India any dynamism. Even in disputing the argument of degradation, James Mill (1992) nonetheless refused to see India as anything but frozen in time. He framed his response to the earlier Orientalists by arguing that there was no question of India having declined from a great antiquity as no greatness could ever have existed. By denying any positive attributes to India's past, Mill alleged that India was completely stagnant. In Mill's reasoning, India was just as degraded during his observations as it was at any given moment in the past.

The stasis of the colonised was contrasted to the dynamism of the coloniser in order to justify British ideas of similarity and difference in their colonial encounters. Gender was one way in which similarity and difference were articulated and sustained in the colony by both British and Indian elites. Thomas Metcalf (1995) observes this in his examination of the ideologies that supported British rule in India. He begins with an analysis of domestic gender ideals in Britain to suggest that the colonial project in India was gendered from its very inception. According to Metcalf, British experiences in India had already reinvigorated dichotomies of masculine and feminine by the early 19th

century, by which time gender differences were perceived to be scientifically grounded in Britain (Metcalf 1995, 93-94). Metcalf thus correlates these 'scientific' distinctions with the British colonial project that sharpened and informed them.

In the colonial imagination, India and its culture were perceived to be effeminate, thus contrasting the masculinity and purported cultural superiority of the British. Whereas the masculinity of British men remained constant, Indian men were viewed both as misogynist and patriarchal (in their violence towards Indian women) and as effeminate and infantilized (when compared to the British). Indian women were similarly viewed as overly sexualized and degraded (in their exoticisation) while simultaneously passive and subordinated (as the victims of patriarchy). These paradoxical conceptualisations of gender remain in contemporary essentialist discourse.

Having identified various gender constructs employed in colonial India and Victorian England, Metcalf explores how these contributed to the larger theme of difference crucial to the colonial project. Arguing that the denial of similarity was central to British aims in India, Metcalf turns to examples of sati (widow immolation), child marriage and enforced widowhood as quintessential markers of Indian difference. Analysing these records, it becomes apparent that these specific forms of patriarchal violence were not of primary concern for the British - child marriages and enforced widowhood remained at least as prevalent after reform legislation while sati, practiced mostly in Bengal, involved only the smallest fraction of India's population (Metcalf 1995, 96). Thus, rather than the practices themselves, the "dramatic representation of these 'evils'" is what "was essential to the self-image of the Raj (ibid)." The British obsession with sati performing "death as spectacle (ibid)" became the reference point that

could suppress similarity between Indian 'barbarity' on the one hand and ideals of domesticity and the self-sacrificing woman espoused in Britain on the other (Metcalf 1995, 98). Sati, claims Metcalf, was hence not about women but about the supposed backwardness of the society that viewed and encouraged it in all its drama. Emblematic of British anxieties, sati became the marker of absolute difference, morally justifying the British civilizing mission while simultaneously asserting that Indians could never be completely civilized.

Obsessed with sati as the marker of absolute cultural difference, the British turned it into a rallying cry to oppose the purported barbarity of Indian antiquity. Further, the British were accompanied by 'modern' Indian activists in their attempts to ban sati from within Hindu 'tradition.' As Bernard Cohn has shown, British self-perceptions of returning to India a 'purer' yet still 'indigenous' morality were central to the selective formation of colonial judiciary. In order to distill the 'mess' of customary law and reveal the doctrinal cores of Hinduism and Islam, certain forms of knowledge had to be codified and made accessible to British officials. It was popularly believed that such laws could be found in the doctrines and scriptures of these two main religions of India. By organizing Hindu law as separate from Muslim law, colonial officials thus upheld these two communities as being independent of each other, despite their historical sodality. Hindu and Muslim 'cultures' were effectively being sealed off from each other and suspended in time. In line with the opinion that Indian custom and culture had fallen from the proverbial Golden Age, older texts were given more authority. So great was this desire to compile a "complete digest of Hindu and Mussulman [sic] law (Cohn 1996, 69)" that Sir William Jones – a major advocate for restoring Hindu and Muslim 'law' – was afraid that

he would be accused of "proposing to be made the Justinian of India (cited by Cohn 1996, 69)" should his activities in India become known to officials in London.

The example of sati and the (re)implementation of scriptural doctrines demonstrate that colonial laws in India were formed in ways that kept religion at the fore. Yet a separation between religious and secular laws had to be maintained to pacify British concerns regarding their explicit support of 'heathen' rules and regulations (Metcalf 1995, 36). As a result, those laws that were derived from religious sources were codified to create juridical policies; religious laws were studied and redefined as civil laws. This codification effectively suspended time so that Hindu and Muslim laws became ahistorical in scope and nature. This stood in complete contrast to British common law, which was based on precedent and therefore historically derived. British customs were regarded to change with time and it was expected that their laws should accommodate this (Cohn 1996, 71). This equation of law and custom meant that the codification and temporisation of one would affect the other. British law was continually developing, therefore its customs were assumed to do the same; Indian laws were scripturally oriented and applicable across time, therefore their customs were assumed to never change.

Responsibility for the colonial production of knowledge did not rest on British shoulders alone. Attempts to assert Indian identity and legitimacy were also made on the parts of the Indian intelligentsia. Lata Mani (1989) brings attention to the Indian scholars and elites who participated in the re-adoption of sati as an Indian 'tradition' and argues that they too participated in sustaining colonial discourse. By privileging Bhraminic scripture and equating it with tradition, progressive (anti-sati) and orthodox (pro-sati)

elites nonetheless maintained the colonial reverence for ancient custom as the authentic site of cultural authority. In her analysis, the relationship between scripture and women did not make sati a question about women but about what constituted true and authentic culture.

Deconstructing the debate on sati, Mani notes that its cruelty towards women was never of primary focus. Instead, selective interpretations of specific texts became the key arsenal for arguments on both sides of the debate. According to Mani, this is especially exemplified by the trajectory of the arguments made by Rammohun, a prominent anti-sati lobbyist "commonly regarded as the first modern champion of women's rights (Mani 1989, 110)." Rammohun presents a definite shift in his writings against sati, writings that were initially grounded in arguments of logic and reason and later in appeals to antiquity and scripture. Mani interprets this shift to be indicative of Rammohun's relationship to the emerging dominance of an official Western discourse that only recognized India's greatness in terms of its scriptural past. By consulting scripture as the authority on sati, both its British and Indian opponents and proponents effectively made it the authority on Indian custom.

Mani's questioning of the ways in which the debate on sati was seen as a 'modernizing' discourse highlights the contradiction between tradition and modernity inherent in this debate. She points out that by using ancient scripture to argue against sati, Rammohun and other reformers were not criticizing 'outmoded' practices but claiming that sati was not 'outmoded enough' (Mani 1989, 116). Rather than rely upon arguments of reason – a marker of modernity – Rammohun challenged pro-sati lobbyists by citing scriptures that showed support for the practice to be ambiguous at best. She attempts to

reconcile this contradiction by situating the debate on sati as a "modern discourse on tradition (ibid)." This allows her to therefore suggest that tradition and modernity were simultaneously produced in the discourse of sati. By applying ancient scripture to their present, Rammohun and others validated it as permanently relevant, thus presenting Indian culture as constant and unchanging.

This transhistorical production of 'tradition' divested sati of any historical or political relevance and relegated it instead to the static realm of culture. Furthermore, it also denied women any complexity or subjectivity. Women who were forced to become satis were perceived to be victims of a harsh and patriarchal society; those who did it by choice were viewed as selfless victims of a higher order, namely religion. Regarded as an abject victim or a selfless heroine, the sati – and by extension, the woman – was nonetheless made "particularly susceptible to discourses of salvation, whether these [were] articulated by officials or the indigenous elite (Mani 1989, 117)." Equating women with tradition, the approach of British officials and Indian elites to civilizing and protecting Indian culture was played out over the woman without actually engaging her subjectivity.

This tug of war between tradition and modernity continues in contemporary readings of multiculturalism. Those cultures visibly marked as different are consistently conceived of as inherently traditional while the mainstream is imagined as effectively modern. The paradox of this reasoning lies in the fact that many of the attributes employed to mark some cultures as 'traditional' have themselves been strategically constructed in relatively recent times. The tradition/modernity binary creates a dilemma of choosing the one over the other without recognising the ways in which the one creates

the other. An example of this is the lingering presence of sati in contemporary imaginations of Indian practices, forever viewed as 'ancient.' While arguments for or against sati no longer appear explicit in popular discourse, the patriarchal violence used to explain it is constantly apparent in arguments that posit certain (i.e. South Asian) cultures as incommensurate to the mainstream.

In her study of the binary logic that places feminism in opposition to multiculturalism in contemporary rights discourse, Leti Volpp (2001) analyses the media coverage of the 1992 murder of Aleyamma Mathew. A Christian originally from South India, Mathew was burnt to death by her husband Mathew Varughese in Texas after twenty years of marriage. Following this violent tragedy, the *Dallas Observer* ran the headline: "Battered by her husband, Parkland Nurse Aleyamma Mathew remained true to her culture. In the end she became its victim (cited by Volpp 2001, 1188)." Volpp describes the coverage of Mathew's murder at length:

> The article reported that 'Aleyamma Mathew may have been fated to die by fire,' and confused her murder with sati by stating that, while '[s]ati was outlawed in the late 1800s, and only a handful of cases have been reported in the last two decades... the tradition of wife burning continues.' Note that Aleyamma Mathew was Christian... and not Hindu. In other words, she was not even in the relevant category of one who might purportedly engage in *sati*. The article further suggested that Mathew died because she confronted 'Indian tradition': '[B]efore going to sleep this night, Aleyamma would repeat again what no Indian woman, even in America says without repercussions: she would tell her husband no.' The article later stated that '[b]y the measure of Indian tradition, Mathew Varughese's wife made two mistakes: she gave him only daughters and she dared to tell him no. She paid for it with her life' (ibid).

This article leaves no room for diversity within the category of Indian. According to it, all Indian women are simply passive and subservient victims of 'tradition.' It suggests that

even the move to America is not enough to instil in Indian women the confidence or strength to disobey their husbands' command. No reference is made to the years of physical and verbal abuse that Mathew Varughese inflicted upon his wife (Volpp 2001, 1187). In the end, it is Indian history and culture that are ultimately made responsible for her death. The colonial investment in or the 'modern' production of this 'tradition' is never considered. Even though the journalist was unable to cite more than "only a handful of cases... in the last two decades," the pre- nineteenth century practice of sati is still said to "continue." One can only wonder how statistics on domestic violence and murder in 'American' houses in the last twenty years would compare to this Indian "tradition of wife burning."

Volpp brings attention to the historical situatedness and dynamism of culture to argue that it does not exist in a vacuum. It is therefore inaccurate to posit feminism in opposition to culture, as is done by contemporary rights discourses that often cease to argue for the rights of women visibly marked by their cultures. This erroneous binary forces women to abandon any claims to culture in order to gain the protection of purportedly universal rights. Volpp emphasizes the strong role of Western feminist and liberal frameworks in supporting and reproducing this dichotomy. In her analysis, rights are wrongly assumed to exist in the spaces between demarcated cultures without taking into account the ways in which these cultures interact with each other and contest violence from within. Such selective assumptions as those held by western feminists and liberals obscure the extent to which problems 'rooted' in one community are in fact related to and shaped by the structural forces of a larger social system. .They also ignore

the colonial assumptions that defined various cultures and their 'natural' attributes in the first place.

The analyses of Metcalf and Mani also support arguments against cultural essentialism and therefore complement Volpp's examination of culture, rights and multiculturalism. All three bring necessary attention to those ignored most by essentialising discourses – women. The assumption that (a lack of) culture must be a precondition for rights is not only theoretically unfounded, it risks the perpetual exclusion of those who identify with specific cultures and maintains the absolute denial of their supposedly universal rights. The equation of women and tradition means that the ways in which this process invokes gender cannot be ignored. While the debate on sati can be accurately described as colonial in nature, manifestations of its argument are nonetheless apparent today.

Deconstructing the codification of the colonial judiciary system and its effects on elements of Indian culture as well as contemporary analyses of violence in certain 'ethnic' communities is an important point of departure to understand the complexities of cultural/artistic performances in a multicultural setting. As the Dance Works programme cover demonstrated, the link between representations of 'ethnic' art and culturally specific violence is all too strong in the Canadian imaginary. The very nature of multiculturalism suggests that an artistic practice rooted in a given culture cannot be read as separate from that culture in its entirety; 'their' art is not allowed to stand for itself. Yet this challenge holds within it the potential for change. By ensuring that the connection between the dance and the culture from which it comes is maintained in all its complexity, ethical performances can challenge prejudicial and simplistic assumptions

about particular cultures. Exploring the intricacies of Indian classical dance, one is simultaneously able to broaden perceptions of tradition and culture, in India and abroad.

While the figure of the *devadasi* was crucial to the project of nation-building in independent India, the contemporary Indian classical dancer in Canada has similar importance in upholding notions of Canadian belonging. This is elucidated by Sara Ahmed's analysis of the 'hybrid' subject-position, which can be seen as a parallel figure to the multicultural Subject. Although there is a persistent incongruity between who is labelled 'hybrid' and who is labelled 'native,' the two are related through particular mechanisms of power. According to Ahmed, knowledge and consumption are central factors in constituting the dominance of the 'hybrid' identity; this hybridisation is made possible "insofar as the hybrid subject remains defined against the 'native' subject who, paradoxically, is also represented as *being* the stranger (2000, 13)." Ahmed's insights are particularly useful as they draw attention to the reliance of hybriditiy/multiculturalism on the figure of the stranger and the enforcement of cultural and social boundaries. Furthermore, her insights complicate the insufficiently reductive relation of Self/Other by underscoring the acts whereby subjects differentiate between themselves and come to understand the familiar verses the strange (Ahmed 2000, 15). The self-awareness of the Canadian audience is facilitated by the Indian classical dancer (just as the lotus show allowed Dance Works to define its dance) while the Indian classical dancer, in turn, requires the figure of the *devadasi* to perform herself. The knots of tradition and modernity, colonialism and multiculturalism, are ever-more tightened.

In addition to explicating the formation of 'tradition' and the suspension of time for non-Europeans, the colonial encounter can explain another aspect of multiculturalism – mainstream society's contemporary adoption of it. Many theorists of multiculturalism have argued that, in this discourse, the mainstream is conceived of and measured as the white population, disassociated from the visible markings of culture (Ahmed, 2000;

Bannerji, 2000; Hage, 2000; Gilroy, 1987, 2005). This mainstream is allowed to observe, consume and learn from the various cultures that come to live within 'its' national boundaries. It is constituted by 'multicultural' people whose subjectivity is presupposed and who are to be enriched by their exposure to various multi-cultures; they are the mobile, white Subjects who stand in contrast to the confined 'natives' (Mohanram, 1999). As such, the mainstream is allowed to progress and thus exemplify dynamism. Disassociated from particular (essentialised) cultures, these Subjects are contrasted against Other cultural groups which can never be fully admitted to the mainstream. This results in the interesting dynamic whereby those who are visibly identified as belonging to specific cultures are thought of as cultural while those in the mainstream – those who lament not having a culture - are imagined to be *multi*cultural.

The fact that those societies that celebrate their multiculturalism are themselves premised upon histories of colonisation and settlement cannot be overlooked. Studying whiteness in Australia, Ghassan Hage views it as a 'fantasy' of cultural dominance that is born out of the history of European expansion (Hage1999, 20). Offering this definition, he analyses the seemingly opposing constructions of 'white racism' and 'white multiculturalism' and demonstrates how the two overlap in similar projects of cultural supremacy. He argues that whiteness is consonant with fantasies of white nation. In this fantasy, white racists and white multiculturalists share the self-perception that it is their right and duty to determine the course of Australian society, positioning themselves as 'masters of the nation'. While more obvious in the case of the white racist, the white multiculturalist is similarly accused of objectifying 'ethnic' peoples. According to Hage, diversity is simply conceived of as something meant to be managed. Multiculturalism is thus seen to require a delicate treading between containment/management and exclusion similar to the paradoxical relationship of similarity and difference that furthered the colonial project.

In Metcalf's discussion of similarity/difference in colonial India, he argued that a certain amount of commensurability was required to uphold the promise of the colonising mission (to make the colonised 'them' more like the colonising 'us'). At the same time however, an element of incommensurability was invariably assumed in order to justify this very mission ('they' will never be like 'us'). This paradox effectively doomed the colonising mission to failure from the beginning; the success of making the colonised subject commensurate would at the same time render Britain's colonial presence unnecessary. Hage identifies a similar contradiction in contemporary Australian multiculturalism, which is premised on notions of tolerance. The concept of tolerance means that the object to be tolerated – what Hage calls the 'object of multiculturalism' – is constructed for purposes of evaluation. It is not simply meant to be judged as positive or negative but is instead viewed as positive *and* negative. Containment in the fantasy of white multiculturalism relies on the strategic inclusion of the appreciable/tolerable cultural object that it evaluates. As Hage highlights, neither complete exclusion nor inclusion is sufficiently beneficial to maintaining the social relations encouraged by European-oriented multiculturalism. The strategic deployment of similarity (inclusion) and difference (exclusion) remains pertinent in the ambiguity of today.

The colonial histories of contemporary, self-proclaimed multicultural societies have facilitated the dominance of their mainstream white nationals. This in part explains the current anxieties that are popularly acknowledged to accompany multiculturalism. Paul Gilroy (2005) diagnoses these anxieties over cultural identity as 'postcolonial melancholia,' arguing that British apprehensions about multiculturalism stem from the lost glories of Empire and the "unprocessed history of colonial rule (432)." In Gilroy's analysis, the fact that Britain's 'strangers' are in fact 'semi-strangers' is particularly troubling; Britain is forced to confront the presence of those who have migrated from former colonies and demonstrate a disarmingly intimate knowledge of British culture as a

result of their colonial education (Gilroy 2005, 433-434). This situation once again calls to task the questions of universalism, liberal rights and citizenship that proved contradictory in the initial colonial encounter (Mehta, 1999).

The nostalgia for Empire works alongside processes of globalisation, immigration and decolonisation in Gilroy's analysis of the politics of race and nation in Britain. Such revisionist histories as those written by Niall Ferguson and Saul David are particularly indicative of the melancholic trend that Gilroy describes (Gilroy 2005, 437). For example, Ferguson – a celebrated historian and Harvard professor who specialises in economic history and the history of empire – maintains that the destructive nature of imperialism is nonetheless outweighed by its resulting benefits of modernity, progress and development (Ferguson, 2003). The brutality of colonialism is deemed necessary to the inevitable march of progress, so much so that Ferguson argues against decolonisation, which he regards as responsible for the economic devastation of many former colonies (Ferguson, 2004). Arguing that the partial or complete suspension of national sovereignty for some former colonies may be more beneficial than full independence, Ferguson maintains that "empire is more necessary in the 21st century than ever before (cited in Jacques, 2004)" depite the fact that globalisation (successor to colonialism) has further devastated countries in the developing world. What is most strikingly represented by such histories is not just the remembrance of Empire or the accidental re-production of it, but the demands for Empire that they seem to make. Referring to these revisionist histories, Gilroy argues that "[s]uch approaches to the glories of the past have become attractive and inspiring in a geo-political situation in which the revival of empire has been explicitly demanded (ibid)." Such articulations of colonial history reveal much about the self-perception of Britain as a 'multicultural' society.

Having analysed mainstream, white society's investment in multiculturalism, it is necessary to turn to those who present their cultures to its gaze. Just as twentieth-century

nationalists reproduced colonial logic in their self-identification and opposition to imperial rule (Chatterjee, 1999), those identified as 'cultural' in the contemporary context risk ossifying their cultures as timeless and homogeneous in their attempts to gain recognition. Gayatri Spivak (1999) analyses the contemporary phenomenon of transmigration and globalisation in what she terms 'the financialisation of the world.' In doing so, she examines the twin processes of representation – referring to certain elites who come to act as proxy for the cultures of the decolonised nations from which they migrated – and re-presentation – referring to the (re)enactment of specific cultural scripts in the multicultural context. An analysis of multiculturalism that recognises the importance of history is benefited by the concept of cultural representation and re-presentation. Such a concept is furthermore important for a study of Indian classical dance performance that seeks to recognise the responsibilities of the dancer and audience in engaging an art form, a tradition and a 'culture.'

In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak traces the 'native informant' through various colonial and postcolonial practices. Referring to the 'colonial subject,' she argues that he/she was not a subaltern figure as he/she had access to social mobility. This 'colonial subject' can be seen as the equivalent of Thomas B. Macaulay's ideal "class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect (Macaulay, 1835)." According to Spivak, this particular subject is today the 'postcolonial informant.' In her estimation, the postcolonial/native informant has two options after having migrated in the interests of global capital: he/she can either represent his/her decolonised nation through the legitimised narratives of cultural and ethnic specificity and continuity, or he/she can focus on upward class mobility so that any changes seen in the metropolis are simply viewed as changes in the ethnic composition of the population and not in the relations of power (Spivak 1999, 364). This second option is

seen to recode 'mimicry as resistance' and parallels similar actions in the colonial encounter.

Spivak underscores the intersectionality of race, class and gender in her analyses of transmigration, postcolonialism and nationalism. She contests outright the tradition/culture – modernity/rights dichotomy by claiming that the political challenge for diasporic peoples is to rethink their "countries of origin not only as repositories of cultural nostalgia but also as part of the geopolitical present (Spivak 1999, 402)." As such, the museumisation of decolonised cultures celebrated through multiculturalism cannot be maintained. Room must therefore also be made within the metropole to recognise the heterogeneity of the various 'cultural' groups that have gravitated to its centre for reasons of political and economic migration.

According to Spivak, this project necessitates a greater understanding of the social, historical and economic factors of global migration. Such efforts towards transnational literacy are required on the parts of people both *here* and *there* as nationalist bourgeoisies and migrants to First World spaces share complicity in furthering the interests of global capital (Spivak 1999, 381-382). Spivak is therefore critical of the postcolonial informant who, in representing him/herself as marginal in metropolitan spaces such as the United States, disavows his/her dominant status in the country from which he/she originated (Spivak 1999, 396). While theorists have pointed out that the migrant experience facilitates shared identities that are premised on the lowest common denominator (Radhakrishnan, 2003) – so that people who identified as Parsi or Bengali in India relate to each other as Indian in the diaspora – Spivak argues that a cultural identity that does not take capital into account remains incomplete and stands to be challenged. No room is left for notions of culture as essentially definable, static or impermeable.

Spivak's insights deserve particular attention in the context of diasporic performances of Indian classical dance. The revival of the dance meant that many of its

professional performers were of privileged backgrounds; their economic class can be said to have leant a 'modern' respectability to the art form given the potential link between modernity and capital (Chatterjee 1999, 234-236). This association between economic class and artistic classicism is tangible in contemporary performances, where classical arts are too often perceived to belong to the purview of the elite. Given performers' and audiences' ready investment of Indian classical dance with the ability to represent all of Indian national culture, this connection must be challenged. To do otherwise would once again enable the exclusionary power relations that confined the *devadasi* specifically and other cultural subaltern figures generally. It also denies diversity within the South Asian diaspora, celebrates a particular, privileged sector within this community, and thereby allows elites to monopolise the power of representation and further historic exclusions.

With specific reference to the politics and processes of cultural representation, the postcolonial informant also stands to engage in a project of "atuoexoticisation (Chakravorty 2006, 97)." This can only be challenged from a perspective that recognises the historical and contrapuntal interactions between coloniser and colonised as well as multiculturalist 'hybrid' and cultural 'native.' Allowing for the implications of class, gender and race further demonstrates the complexity that attends cultural representations prevalent today. That contemporary processes of representation are similar to those of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicates the extent to which the assumptions that fuel them are deeply embedded in societal imagination. It also denotes the enormity of the challenge for any attempts to contest their fallacious constructs. Without recognising that the cultural inequities sustained by multicultural practice are built into the very framework of such society, it becomes impossible to challenge these discrepancies or realise a different way of being. Taking for granted certain definitions of culture advanced in multicultural discourse obscures histories of colonialism and

marginalisation, and makes it impossible to address present problems or develop ways to create positive change.

It might be argued that multiculturalism, premised on it supposed notions of tolerance and acceptance, stands as antithetical to the divisive policies of colonialism. However, understanding the relationship between specific representations of culture and their reproductions in multicultural societies demonstrates the strong bond between contemporary multiculturalism and its parent colonialism. Cuisine, arts and costuming are major sites of consumption that enable perceptions of marked cultures as timeless. Observing an artistic performance or donning a 'traditional' costume allows the autonomous multiculturalist to participate directly in the historical representations of other cultures, however constructed these may be. The temporary and superficial engagements of multiculturalism with particular cultures make it possible for mainstream society to appropriate the entire histories of certain groups. Freezing particular cultures in time, mainstream society – whose clock never stops ticking – is able to travel in and out of various cultural and temporal realms, observing and participating in what it may while simultaneously asserting its national identity and entitlement through its insistence on difference.

Multiculturalism's dependency on the 'soft' aspects of culture, the food clothes and arts of its Others, is readily recognised. However, in order to develop a greater understanding of this dependency and the problematic cultural representations that it maintains, attention must be brought to the colonial encounters that shaped them. To assume a fixed culture is to ossify it, to understand particular aspects of a culture as isolated from others is inaccurate. Interrogating the discursive invention of sati as 'tradition' is as necessary to understanding contemporary multiculturalism as is analysing the role of diasporic/'ethinc' arts in this society. The issues revealed in the debate on sati

are seen to be congruent to and supporting of the same project that essentialises particular cultures and arts today.

The lotus shoe with which this chapter began represents a nineteenth-century Chinese custom that becomes equated with the various multi-cultures that compose Canadian society. The ease with which one 'ethnic' culture can stand for another in this national imaginary must not only be addressed, it stands to be challenged. To do otherwise would maintain the ossification and temporisation of specific cultures. The colonial constructs that essentialised categories of culture, race and gender have been powerful forces in shaping multiculturalism, both in Canada and other Western societies. While anti-colonial nationalist movements achieved the independence of many countries, including India/Pakistan in 1947, breaking through the cultural representations upon which colonialism relied is a task that remains to be completed. It is only in the undoing of these representations that a different kind of multiculturalism can be imagined.

CONCLUSION

It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately only the source of all culture.

-Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 1959

In June 2006, the University of British Columbia hosted The World Peace Forum in Vancouver. The elimination of racism was the topic of one of the key plenary at the Forum, which attracted delegates from many countries and backgrounds. Speakers brought attention to the institutional racism of Canadian immigration and social security policies, as well as to the discriminatory practices of American racial profiling. The plenary looked at many examples of social injustice from around the world to argue for the rights of marginalised peoples in various countries. Yet even this globally-conscious discussion drew on images informed by the colonial constructs discussed in this work. In a final report, the World Peace Forum identified its aim to end child prostitution in India:

> Also discussed was the urgent need to stop the process of becoming a "Devadasi" (sex worker) which is still prevalent as a profession and continues to be "sanctioned" by religion. This practice robs girls from leading future lives in dignity and has serious health implications: reproductive track infections, sexually transmitted diseases and some reports cite that 78% of women go through frequent abortions or give birth to children who too will undergo the same deplorable cycle as their mothers- facts which are often silenced. Some disturbing figures of prostitution cited were: 10 million in Bombay, 9 million in Calcutta, 7 million in Delhi and 3 million in Agra. According to a World Bank report for 2005-2006, India has half of the world's child labour victims which represent one of the seediest aspects of global stratification (Birdi, 2006).

By equating contemporary sex work and child labour with the *devadasi*, a woman whose life was dedicated to the temple and whose dance was an important feature of religious ritual before the anti-*nautch* legislation of the mid-twentieth century, this quote demonstrates the slippage between past and present that conscribes certain cultures. The image of the *devadasi* was first glorified and later maligned; her hyper-sexuality was emphasised in the colonial discourse that became obsessed with her. By appealing to this figure that came to represent the eroticism of Hinduism in Orientalist discourse, the World Peace Forum effectively reproduced cultural stereotypes of India as overly

sexualised and hyper-religious. Furthermore, many of the urban centres cited for their staggering statistics in this report were never areas where *devadasi* practice occurred. Regionally specific, temple *devadasis* were most prevalent in southern and eastern India, not in the northern regions of Delhi or Agra where courtly dancers were more common. While child prostitution is a grave concern and must be seriously addressed, mistakenly identifying contemporary sex workers as *devadasis* creates a situation through which effective change cannot be realised. By referring to prostitution - which occurs everywhere – as an ancient and religious practice particular to India, this problem is imagined to exist specifically on the sub-continent. Indian culture is once again essentialised and exoticised. Furthermore, the dangers of prostitution in other countries – Canada with its horrendous record of violence against prostitutes revealed in the recent Pickton trial (Jiwani and Young, 2006), for example – remain overlooked in this analysis.

The example from the World Peace Forum demonstrates that the *devadasi* is continually circumscribed by cultural stereotype and simplistic essentialism. Without referring to the complexities of the *devadasi* or the history of Indian classical dance, the writers of this report nonetheless employ this figure in order to locate their own (moral) subjectivities. The dance is nowhere and everywhere in this report.

In order to develop ways of creating positive change and to address problems such as the prostitution to which this report brings attention, processes of cultural essentialisation and exclusion must be understood and subsequently resisted. This necessitates that the intricacies and dynamism of various cultures, traditions and expressions be appreciated. *Entertaining Subalternity* offers one example of the ways in which this can be done through a study of Indian classical dance. Unravelling the complexities of this artistic tradition and highlighting its historical relationship to processes of subject formation and the building of national identity, this work has considered a variety of supposedly disparate yet interrelated issues. It suggests that

tradition and modernity are both projects requiring extensive effort. This is evidenced both by the colonial project that employed this binary to determine who could rule and who was to be ruled, and by the anti-colonial nationalism that sought to assert its own national/cultural identity through an adoption/transcendence of it. Despite their reclamation of 'tradition', nationalists nonetheless demonstrated an internalisation of colonial forms of classification and organisation. Maintaining this distinction has been integral to asserting the coherency and continuity of culture as a site of national identity. Dance, with its visual performance and ability to recall a long history, has had a primary role within this cultural realm and has therefore inspired the attention of this study.

As has been demonstrated, the link between culture and national identity has also meant that those excluded from the former have been simultaneously denied access to the latter. This was apparent for the *devadasi*, seen to be too debased to enjoy the propriety of culture and thus excluded from national belonging. Yet, this is also the case in the multicultural context where those marked by culture are denied complete access to the nation. Ironically, dancers born and raised in this context are denied full belonging to the multicultural nation by virtue of the very art that secures such national belonging in India. This introduces a new point of investigation which, though not explicitly explored in this work, deserves attention for it speaks to generations of diasporic experiences.

The importance of dance in securing notions of 'proper' Indian culture suggests that nationalist narratives are embodied in a myriad of ways. This in turn brings attention to the deep-rootedness of these narratives in individual subjectivities. That the nation can be embodied by some at the exclusion of others must be addressed for it demonstrates differential power relations that cannot be maintained. This is because the ability to embody and therefore speak for the nation is necessarily shown to form around questions of race, class and gender. Addressing the inequality brought about by these interlocking issues is integral to the struggle of national consciousness.

This study of Indian classical dance has also brought attention to the ways in which nationalist mythologies require work. The figure of *Bharata Mata* is one such example in its ability to present an indigenous and sacred nation space. These mythologies are premised upon notions of shared identity, common history and coherent conceptualisations of Others. As such, these mythologies give birth to various subjectivities for they create those who do and do not belong. Furthermore, the work that they require is forever on-going. Thus, every emphasis on the classicism of Indian classical dance is another condemnation of the *devadasi*; every celebration of this art as ancient is a reification of Indian culture.

Addressing these political challenges requires an artistry of its own. The political is made cultural, the cultural made artistic, and the artistic made political. Indian classical dance has enjoyed a long and vibrant history. To not appreciate this would be a disservice for it would mean that any such representation of the dance and its culture would be artificially simplistic. Essentialising the dance maintains the exclusions of Indian nationalism (born in part from the exclusions of colonialism) as well as the very apparatus through which multiculturalism posits certain communities and cultures as incommensurate and thus undeserving. Bringing together a host of actors, a variety of spatial and temporal contexts and a range of political and social issues, unravelling and appreciating the full force of Indian classical dance may be one way in which to bring about greater understanding and potential change. Not limited to an ancient time or a distant location, Indian classical dance can speak to a number of experiences, all of which deserve attention.

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