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'Let us Live as Hindus': Narrating Hindu Identity Through Temple Building Processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost (1988-2015)

Swamy, P.

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CONCLUSION TO PART I

The making of a 'Hindu' community in Amsterdam Zuidoost is a strategic process that has involved negotiating across different migration trajectories and Dutch policies of migrant integration. The emergence of a Hindu identity in Amsterdam Zuidoost relies heavily on the Hindustani experiences as ex-indentured labourers. Their migration trajectory and their experiences in Surname are often conflated with what it is to be 'Hindu', meaning that a highly diverse community is often strategically connected to issues that may not directly reflect their own experiences. In turn, Hindus from Afghanistan, India and Pakistan can benefit from the cultural capital that the Hindustanis enjoy and allow the responsibility of representing the community in the public sphere fall upon their shoulders.

What is more, the Hindu community in Amsterdam Zuidoost must negotiate its unique history: Unlike cities like the Hague or towns like Almere, Amsterdam Zuidoost was built up as a social experiment to discover an alternative and futuristic living situation that was eventually undermined by the reality of migration into the neighbourhood, particularly waves of migrants from newly independent Suriname.

The struggle for Hindus in the neighbourhood to produce the locality as their own is not only an issue of adjusting to the alienating social structures of the honeycomb style apartment buildings, it was also an adjustment to organising themselves into clearly delineated 'ethnic groups' in order to stake a claim to funding from the government's once-generous welfare organisation subsidies, which would eventually fund the temple of their dreams.

That the goal of establishing a grand, purpose-built temple worth millions of euros is still a distant dream does not mean that the community has given up on the idea of intervening into public space. On the contrary, with their four makeshift and invisible temple spaces, Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost set up a permanent-yet-temporary series of structures wherein they can privately worship and house deities while also coming together as Hindus to develop their specific visions of how Hinduism should be practiced and imagined.

The closing of the DD temple space is the critical event that has caused Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost to become more heterogeneous and less publicly unified as a group. While there are many people who still wait to see D.D temple reinstated, many have also seen this as an opportunity to explore their own spaces of worship based on their ethnic identity (such as Asamai) or to engage more directly with cultural politics and specifically 'Hindu' worldviews (as they do in SSD temple). While the reasons may vary, the establishment of these invisible, heterotopic spaces points to the continued placemaking efforts of Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost, as they continue to grapple with the anxiety of feeling marginalised in a so-called multicultural urban neighbourhood.

Part II will explore in more detail the DD temple narrative, beginning in the late 1980s. By exploring how templeisation processes and the construction of Hindu identity are connected, I will demonstrate how various narrative registers emerge that strategically mobilise the affective condition of Hindu hurt in the campaign to establish a purpose-built temple in Amsterdam Zuidoost.