'Let us Live as Hindus': Narrating Hindu Identity Through Temple Building Processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost (1988-2015)
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CHAPTER 7: THE HINDU MORAL ECONOMY AFTER 2010

My use of the term 'moral economy' builds upon its original usage by EP Thompson (1968, 1971), as he discussed the impetus behind the food riot in England in the eighteenth century. The 'moral economy of the poor' (1971, 79), as he defined it, was 'grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community' (*ibid.*). As Fassin (2005) contextualises it, this notion of moral economy, while still tied to an idea about economics, can be more broadly construed as 'the economy of moral values and norms of a given group at any given moment' (365).

As Werbner and Fumanti (2010) have noted with specific reference to diaspora groupings, the moral economy of the African diaspora in the UK and Europe is often explicitly tied to informal ideas about virtuous or moral citizenship (5) that is achieved through practice, rather than formalised notions of legal belonging. The authors also note that the moral economy of citizenship in the African diaspora operates as an alternative to rigid and normative ideas of 'active citizenship' that circulate particularly in British society (6).

In the case of Amsterdam Zuidoost, however, I argue that the emerging moral economy among Hindus in the neighbourhood echoes aspects of the normative discourse on active citizenship in the Netherlands. In particular, the idea of involvement in a society's political and democratic processes—most often narrated as the 'right to vote'—are shown as values in Dutch society that are equally nutured through their religion.

In this way, the emerging Hindu moral economy may echo the moral economy of Ghanaian Methodists in London, as Fumanti (2010) has noted that religious affiliation and attending the Methodist church is considered a 'virtuous performance' (15) wherein Ghanaian migrants can negotiate their role as Christians and what it means to be British (15-16).

However, the constructions of citizenship among Ghanaian Methodists that Fumanti observes differ fundamentally from Hindus, especially Hindustanis in Amsterdam Zuidoost. While both cases demonstrate an important connection between religious affiliation and the articulation and performance of citizenship duties, my Hindustani respondents have ,since their arrival in the neighbourhood, been considered legally 'Dutch'. Therefore, their more informal performances of citizenship are not in place of legal performances, but instead reinforce their position as legal members of Dutch society.

In fact, since the late 1980s, there has been a tendency to frame the Hindustani community, and by extension, the Hindu community in the Netherlands, as a 'model minority' that is well adjusted, well integrated, and socio-economically successful (Choenni 2015, 45 Boissevain and Grotenberg 1985). In 1992, the well-read weekly national magazine, Elsevier, ran a cover story that read 'Hindustanis: Portrait of A Successful Minority' that detailed again a strong work ethic, a

value for socio-economic success, and a strong religious and cultural background that was compatible with 'Dutch[75]' values (Elsevier 1992).

However, the narratives presented in this chapter will point out the ways in which the values of socio-economic success and ancestry are increasingly viewed as problematic and 'insincere' among my respondents.

When I first began to discuss the aftermath of the 2010 closing of DD temple space, I observed that many of my respondents took this opportunity to discuss their vision of a 'good' Hindu in order to distance themselves from those they perceived were responsible for the DD temple space's downfall. Building upon the ideas around community solidarity put forth in Part II, my respondents often framed what it means to be 'Hindu' as an identity that focused on social justice, honesty and kindness, rather than that of familial heritage.

Alongside this, Hindus today were ideally described as possessing certain moral capital. I noticed that across ages and socio-economic backgrounds, there was a tendency to lament the fact that Hindus were 'obsessed with money and status', rather than showing an interest in the political and civic duties that demonstrate the intersection of 'Hindu' and 'civic' identities. Being well-educated and moneyed was even looked at rather suspiciously, as my respondents questioned how these 'rich people' actually gave back to their community—both the larger Hindu community and their fellow Dutch citizens. As Tina told me:

'Respect is the most important thing for Hindus, and intention. If I am aware that you [as a Hindu] *are two-faced, two-tongued, that you have a double-agenda, then I will not accept that… A real Hindu has respect for everything…You can't say our community isn't well-educated, but we are not on the right track as Hindus. We see that also because of this,* [we have] *a lot of problems in our private lives. The last 100 years, we only learned how to make money…'*

My respondent Tony, a man in his early 40s, was born in Paramaribo and had come to the Netherlands as a young boy. He was raised in Amsterdam Zuidoost, and he and his young family still lived in the neighbourhood. During our first conversation, he defined 'Hindu' as a universal category of 'goodness' and moral behaviour, somewhat unfettered from cultural or familial heritage. He, like Tina, felt that there were many people who considered themselves Hindus, but did not 'live their life' as a Hindu ought to. This had less to do with earning money or being successful, but with showing empathy towards others both inside and outside of the community. He felt that what he had learned about Hinduism from his spiritual teacher and his own experiences demonstrated that Hindus should behave openly and lovingly to everyone:

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[75] For a discussion of the abstract and illusive meaning of 'Dutch values' see van Reekum (2012, 2014), Verkaaik (2009).

'A Hindu is someone who loves everyone, who loves himself and loves God. A Hindu respects everyone. No ego, no racism. I think that a real Hindu has to always be in love with other people. Some Hindus don't accept this—you still have caste discrimination and class discrimination. You have some people who are rich and they don't care about poor people, or they care about colour—fair or dark. Those kinds of things are a big problem, those people are not really Hindus.'

Like Tony, Maya was also involved in spiritual movements such as 'Art of Living'[76] as well as grew up attending Sunday morning temple worship at DD temple space. She, too, gave a more general, abstract definition of 'Hindu', building on diasporic definitions of Hinduism as a 'way of life' (Knott 2009, Nesbitt 2006). At the same time, her definition echoes of diaspora Hindutva notions of a tolerant, peaceful religion (Knott 2009, 105, Bhatt and Mukta 2000, 409):

'Hindu is not a belief, it is a way of life. You can be a Hindu in your own way, you don't have a definition of 'Hinduism.' I would say that respectful living, with each other-- and each other means all souls on earth—I think that is Hinduism. I believe anyone can be a Hindu, I don't think Hindu is related to what you look like or where you lived or what kind of family name you carry. Not at all. I also believe it is never written that Hindus are' like this' or 'like that'.'

Uma, one of my respondents in her mid forties who had grown up in Paramaribo, found it a difficult question to answer. After pondering the question briefly, she also defined 'Hindu' as an abstract term, unfettered from a specific cultural or connotation:

'I think a Hindu is just a good human being. Don't harm anyone, just be good, that what a Hindu is. When I hear the word [Hindu] *it reminds me of something good, a good person'.*

While the vignettes above do represent the majority of voices I have interviewed, it cannot be assumed that culture and ancestry play no role in the definition of a 'good Hindu'. For example, While Maya did strongly believe that 'Hindu' is an abstract identity unfettered from family name, she did repeatedly stress that Hinduism was 'part of her heritage[77]' and was one of the 'strengths passed on through her family'. Similarly, Tina also felt that her family had 'taught

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[76] Spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar started the 'Art of Living' foundation in 1981. Now established in 152 countries in the world, the foundation aims to educate the world about non-violence and stress-free living, two central tenets to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's philosophy. See www.artofliving.org.

[77] During the course of my fieldwork, I did however observe a few 'non-heritage' Hindus (those coming from a background other than South Asian or South Asian diasporic) worshipping in various temples in Amsterdam Zuidoost. These individuals were indeed treated as equals and played an active role in festivals and days of worship, some even had roles in the temple board or daily committee that oversaw the running of a temple. However, further research into the relationship between heritage and non-heritage Hindus is necessary. For an introduction to this idea, see Lal (2009).

her about Hinduism' and taught her to 'value her religion', making a strong connection between her heritage and her ideas of being a good Hindu that cannot be ignored.

At the same time, these views, especially Uma's comments, seem to value a definition of Hindu that embraces all people—Hindus and non-Hindus alike. In relation to the elite temple board narratives I have discussed in chapter 4, these comments are a conscious break from the idea that Hindus in Zuidoost should be treated differently than other Hindus.

It is also clear that these definitions of 'Hindu' respond not only to the events of 2010, but to a larger trend within 'middle-class Hinduism'—the turn towards spirituality and individual accountability (Nugteren 2014, 342, Narayanan 2006, 242). In particular this has been facilitated by mediatised access to spiritual leaders and the development of 'yoga' as a ubiquitous global practice.

Despite these seeming contradictions, the attitudes of my respondents point out that simply being born a Hindu is not enough to be known throughout one's life as a Hindu. 'Hindu' is an identity that is earned, rather than bestowed, and requires constant action and performance to re-assert itself. This trend has been well-contextualised by Mahmood (2005) in her study of piety movements among women in Egypt, where various acts such as wearing the veil symbolise the constant, visible reiteration of one's struggle to be and continue to be pious (157).

Active Hinduism as a Technology of the Self

I suggest that active Hinduism is similarly tied to ways of self-governing through a disciplined Hindu habitus (Bourdieu 1986, Foucault 1986b, Pocock 1976, Brosius 2010) that builds upon the Foucauldian notion of 'self governing' as a condition of morality (1986b, 91) and of 'technologies of the self' (Burkitt 2002, 219-20). Foucault (1988) outlines techniques that human beings use to 'perform operations upon themselves and others' (Burkitt 2002, 221). He identifies four 'technologies' that are interrelated in function:

> Technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; *technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.* (Foucault, 1988, 18, emphasis mine)[78]

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[78] Foucault traces development of technologies of the self in Western society to Greco-Roman philosophy and Christian monastic principles from 5th and 6th century CE, he notes the Greco-Roman idea that knowing oneself, a well-established mainstay of Greek philosophy, was accompanied by the idea of taking care of oneself (1988, 20, 1984, 43-5), across a variety of contexts (1984, 54), and even preceded the idea of knowing oneself as illustrated through a range of sources such as Plato's *Apology,* Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity* and Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus* (1988, 21). However, the emphasis on care for the self was obscured by Christian morality that emphasised the importance of self-renunciation as a means to salvation. Secular tradition also uses external law, rather than the self, as the basis of morality, so the importance of

With these ideas in mind, I suggest that active Hinduism is therefore a way in which selves and collectivities act upon themselves to create 'moral and ideal' engaged Hindus. Rather than take the status bestowed by birth or ritual initiation as a guarantee, active Hinduism requires a constant engagement in the making of the moral self.

'Activeness' is a reference to not only the aspects of religion and culture that take place in the temple, but also those that mark off the community's successful 'affective integration' into Dutch society. This includes volunteer work, political involvement, and voting alongside performances of Hindu-ness such as vegetarianism, meditation, yoga, speaking Hindi and appreciating Indian art and literature. I see this process as a response to changing narratives of 'belonging' and 'loyalty' in the Netherlands that are related to cultural and affective performances (Duyvendak, Hurenkamp and Tonkens 2011, de Wilde 2015, van Reekum 2012), and also to a shifting moral economy among my respondents who see hierarchy, discord and secrecy as obstacles to the formation of a strategic 'Hindu' group identity.

I maintain that the markers of dignity assigned to active Hinduism function much like new middle class markers of dignity in urban South India. As Dickey (2013) notes, embodied practices such as dress and fashion are increasingly important to communicating to others that one is of 'middle class' (219). In the case of a Hindu community like that of Amsterdam Zuidoost where the majority of the population is working class, markers of dignity that are unfettered from socio-economic status are increasingly important for imbuing daily life with value[79].

A similar situation can be traced in Brosius' (2010) study of the Akshardham Cultural Complex (ACC) dedicated to the Swaminarayan movement in New Delhi. She highlights that the ACC ideology emphasises life conduct, including the honing of a specific pure habitus including vegetarianism, prayer and teetotalism (145,171) as a code for 'ethical citizens' that suits a modern incarnation of religion (171-2). This allows for middle-class upwardly mobile Hindus to engage in certain levels of consumption while 'towing the moral line' through a strict adherence to a habitus.

Again, it is important to emphasise that activeness certainly does not translate into social mobility. Instead, it translates into powerful moral capital that bestows in-group prestige. What is more, 'activeness' is not only constructed in various ways across classes, it is accessible across classes. I return to this idea later on in chapter 7; but now I turn to the ways in which active Hinduism hinges upon habits of purity.

'knowing' overshadowed 'caring', as in the sixteenth century there was a direct correlation between knowing oneself (the self as an object of knowledge) and theories of knowledge (22).

[79] This relates back to my observations in chapter 6, where serving on a temple board become a marker of dignity for those who did not hold a prestigious position in greater Dutch society.

'Sattivification' as an Articulation of Active Hinduism

My respondents often articulate technologies of active Hinduism as non-brāhmanical, non-hierarchical forms of 'sattvification' (Nugteren 2009, 2014). Nugteren (2009) introduces the neologism 'sattvification' to 'convey the ideology of making both temple and behaviour more sattvic, ie. a more ritually and spiritually pure place' (131). The term was mobilised by a Hindu temple community in Wijchen, who took a rather abstract ideal, popular in yoga and Ayurveda circles and 'applied it to an entire religious edifice, including Sunday meals, and other social gatherings such as weddings or birthday celebrations' (Nugteren 2014, 339).

With the emphasis on abstract ideas of 'goodness' and kindness to others around you in Amsterdam Zuidoost comes also a disciplined Hindu behaviours that are cultivated through restrictions on the body and a focus on spiritual rather than material matters. Particularly among second-generation respondents or young respondents between 20-40, the need to do ritual every day was supplanted by their discussion of constantly engaging in dietary restrictions that were considered spiritually purifying. Many of my respondents spoke of meditation and yoga practice alongside or in place of daily ritual practices. As Tina told me, she made time every day to meditate and pray, and struggled to make the lessons she learned in temples, in texts and in religious teachings actively resonate in her life:

And sometimes what you see in the community…They know how to do their dharma but they do not do it in their daily life, their daily life is totally different than what we know about our dharma. Dharma should be your daily life. You're in the temple and you hear all the lectures, then you go home and do whatever…It should have some impact…One of the things that is part of the dharma is about struggling to gain knowledge…'

An important aspect across generations, gender, ethnic and national background in the definition of 'Hindu' is vegetarianism. Many of my respondents are particularly vocal about not eating beef, and support current campaigns in India to ban beef slaughter.

Often, the first thing I would hear from my respondents was that a Hindu should not eat meat. This was, however, not often reflected among the behaviour of my respondents. Many of them ate white meat and egg, but all of them strictly avoided beef, lamb and pork. Ideally however, a Hindu should be completely vegetarian, which often frustrated many of my young respondents. Saskia used to complain to me during fasting periods that she had to 'be strong' when she passed local fast food restaurants that served chicken.

Tina's thoughts below represent both the value and the guilt that many of my respondents feel when they admit that vegetarianism is an essential Hindu activity:

'A real, good Hindu would say 'I don't eat meat'. Being vegetarian is very important. Being a non-vegetarian, you are allowed to kill animals, you are part of it! [Killing animals]. *I think our Hindu dharma is to be in harmony with nature…Don't abuse nature.'*

Second-generation respondents were also very vocal about the importance of vegetarianism even though many admitted to me that they grew up eating meat, or still ate chicken on occasion. They were, however, proud of being fully vegetarian on Hindu holidays and at least one or two days of the week. However, I observed that the value is not in abstaining from eating beef or meat itself: it is the struggle to abstain, the discipline that is involved in avoiding eating meat that is valuable. It symbolises one's active engagement in a moral neogotiation of what it is to be Hindu.

The habits and lifestyles associated with non-brāhmanical markers of purity are undeniably framed in middle-class, diaspora Hindutva rhetoric. The reasons for not eating beef directly echo rhetoric circulating in India and the diaspora related to the 'vulnerable' position of the cow and the renewed campaigns for cow protection[80] in India, without referring to, or in some cases, being aware of the strong political ideology behind the ban of beef in India. As one of my young female repondents in her 20s named Rieti told me, *'Hindus aren't supposed to eat that stuff anyway',* and dismissed the idea that banning beef would negatively affect other people's lives in India. Very often, people would also frame cow protection as an environmental and development issue, where keeping a cow for milk was of more benefit than sending a cow off for slaughter.

There are also many connections between 'Neo-Hindu' or New-Age religious ethos in many of the performances of non-brāhmanical purity in which my respondents engage, or what Nugteren (2014) aptly describes as 'yogaisation'. This refers to the greater emphasis placed upon self-awareness and self-reflection present in the narrative and practices that circulate in Wijchen, although they are adopted at an individual rather than group level (312-3). This is by and large the case for my respondents, with many of them meditating in their own homes. However, temple spaces, such as LSHT and SSD are increasingly being used as meditation spaces.

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[80] In recent years, the politics of beef-eating has become a national discussion in India. See recent news coverage on the 2015 campaign to ban beef in Uttar Pradesh and other states in India, such as this piece in the Wall Street Journal: http://www.wsj.com/articles/in-india-beef-bans-ignite-debate-over-religion-and-politics-1438853401, and this piece in national newspaper The Hindu that directly relates the RSS and cow protection http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cow-protection-sangh-parivar-for-proactive-approach/article7517160.ece. In the Netherlands, the discussion on beef eating is confined to within the Hindu community, and is not often connected to the RSS or Hindutva. Instead, as I mention above, it is more often framed as a health and an environmental issue. However, there are some Neo-Hindtuva elements of the discussion—especially among my respondents who see beef eating as something that has been prohibited since ancient times. Often, vegetarianism and avoiding beef are associated with 'reconnecting' with one's ancient Hindu roots.

'It Doesn't Matter What you Eat': Rejecting Vegetarianism

At the same time, I spoke to a few community members who felt that restrictions on dietary habits were 'unnecessary' if one wanted to be a 'good' Hindu. Sergio told me that he 'ate what he wanted' and felt that 'spirituality and prayer' should guide religious practice, not by what you eat. He maintained that 'people could be bad even if they didn't eat meat' and felt it an unfair marker of dignity. However, he acknowledged to me that 'more and more Hindus at the temple were becoming vegetarian' on the advice of their family members, spiritual teachers, and even priests in the temple.

Saviti, a single mother of one who had been married to an Indian man after she arrived in the Netherlands in the 1980s, was also very skeptical about vegetarianism. 'We live in a cold country', she had told me, 'we need to eat meat or else we won't get enough nutrition!' While she limited how much beef she and her children ate, she felt that eating poultry in no way undermined her role as a Hindu. Her negotiation of food habits is directly related to her place in Dutch society and the practicalities of living in Europe, rather than negotiated through an abstract moral or spiritual framework.

The importance of 'pure' behaviours, especially vegetarianism, have come to define what it means to be a good Hindu since 2010. While the focus on food habits may seem unconnected to the processes of temple building, I find that it is one of the ways in which my respondents draw attention away from the idea Hindu identity as something inherited from birth. It also demonstrates the ways in which disciplined behaviours such as vegetarianism have become important expressions of active Hinduism.

Political Involvement as an Articulation of Active Hinduism

Another equally important marker of dignity that has emerged since 2010 among Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost has to do with political lobbying and political participation. This goes beyond the act of voting: To act as a dignified member of the community is to use education not only to earn money, but to exert one's own influence and opinion on political matters. My respondents have articulated this to me as directly relating to the failing templeisation processes in the neighbourhood and the closing of DD temple. It became clear to members of the community across backgrounds and temple spaces that political and civic involvement was a way to gain knowledge, power and to formalise their efforts to produce Amsterdam Zuidoost as a Hindu locality. With the experiences that the Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost have regarding templeisation processes, my respondents feel that politics and political power should be a 'new focus' of the community, especially if community actors expect to achieve their goal of a purpose-built temple in the neighbourhood.

Kurien (2007, 245) and Prasad (2000, 2002) have noted that the affluent, upper-middle class Indian Hindu diaspora has become more aware (and successful) in imbricating themselves in American politics. This has meant branching out from the technology and health care professions, where they have been overwhelmingly successful because of recruiting policies attached to the immigration act of 1965 (Prashad 2000, 75). In the UK, Zavos (2012) and Nesbitt (2006) have noted that policy makers have become increasingly aware of the importance of faith communities, and Hindu umbrella organisations increasingly report to and have a stake in government initiatives and policy activities.

The sort of political participation now becoming popular and valuable to Hindus in Amsterdam Zuidoost is instead a matter of focusing on the fact that understanding political power and processes are indispensible tools in the struggle for representation in the public sphere.

In particular, this relates to the way that public houses of worship are erected (Sunier 2009, 162). Sunier notes that erecting a public space is often an exercise to demonstrate one's knowledge of Dutch laws and level in integration that symbolises the restructuring of the public sphere in the Netherlands (169) and requires a level of engagement in political and local affairs that is not often acknowledged. For example, as Verkaaik (2012) notes in his study of mosque-building in Almere, the Netherlands, a community of Muslims in the process of developing plans to build a mosque were well-versed with the laws of urban planning and design. He notes that: 'Members of mosque committees constantly find themselves in negotiations with others—members of the mosque community, architects, bureaucrats, journalist, politicians, neighbourhood residents…' (163). By aligning themselves with the architectural laws and norms of the Netherlands, Verkaaik argues that their mosque-building plans move beyond issues of religious representation in the public sphere and point to strategic and creative ways that a community further socially and culturally integrates itself into Dutch society (2012, 162, 164).

While Verkaaik's research focuses on the ways in which design and mosque-building can be related to integration, I argue here that the post 2010 templeisation processes among the DD community emphasise the importance of understanding and involving oneself in political processes and decision making related to establishing a public space of worship.

When discussing the need for a temple in Amsterdam Zuidoost, many people recognised that the issue was a 'power-struggle' for Hindus against those who misrepresent their interests (see chapter 3) and between the local government. However, as Don illustrates, the Hindu way of life, particularly dharma, has laid the foundation for the Hindu community not only to understand, but to involve themselves in politics and current affairs:

'The dharmic knowledge that is in the scriptures can be applied to the whole world…In a radio programme I have said that what is happening in the Middle East, in Iraq, the bombings…It

is not a religious fight, it is a fight about power…When you start a fight like that there is no more humanity. You don't think about your fellow-men…You are only fighting because you want to have power. You have no mercy with family members, brothers, sisters, etc. It happened exactly that way in the Mahabharata[Hindu epic text]*! If we use the knowledge that exists in Hinduism to fight our battles* [to build a temple] *we will finally be successful. But first we must be prepared to work for the cause'.*

Another reference to the *Mahabharata* came up as I discussed the temple issue with Omar, Tina's husband. As a couple, they were both very invested in the reinstatement of the DD temple to its rightful place in the neighbourhood. Omar spoke passionately about getting involved in the political struggles to reinstate the temple:

'*Hindus should be active*, '*The Mahabharata tells us if there is some injustice it is your duty to act'.*

Besides reinforcing teachings from mythology, political involvement has very real benefits in relation to temple building. I now turn to a specific narrative from within the community to illustrate how political involvement has helped to develop the idea of 'active Hinduism' after 2010.

From Apathy to Engagement: Tina's Narrative

For members of the DD community, the closing of the DD and the events preceding it caused them to become more directly involved in political and civic issues than they ever had before. The closing of the temple, Tina and her husband often told me, was an injustice that was 'teaching Hindus the importance of being involved' in political processes at various levels.

Below, I recount Tina's narrative of political involvement and awareness, as she told me that she changed her engagement with politics and her attitude towards temple building after the events of 2010. Tina's narrative is significant because of her role as a spokesperson for the community after the DD temple closed.

Although she was highly educated and had a large network of contacts, she felt that the DD temple was her first 'real' experience with politics. She told me that earlier in life she was focused on career building, entrepreneurship and networking. However, the events at DD temple had opened her eyes to the fact that temple building was a political and civic issue rather than only a religious one. She began by narrating her experiences directly before 2010, when she was censored in the temple when she spoke out against the politicans and board members who supported a 'businessman's offer' to help build the temple:

A few months before the elections, politicians came to the temple…And they were saying 'Yeah the temple will come, we'll build it', and I saw the game. I took the microphone…In front of the temple, 500 people, I said 'Why are we going to build a temple with the help of a business

man? What will happen next, will we have to buy a ticket to enter the temple?'...In a full house at temple, the chairman took the microphone from my hand [laughs].'

Tina, like other Hindus, felt that this incident made it very clear that only a Hindu could understand the issues at stake in temple building. What is more, it reiterated to Tina the idea that politicians were 'only pretending' to be interested in the temple building issue to gain votes. She elaborated to me that the 'game' to which she referred meant the act of telling the community that the temple would come, just before elections, even though there was 'no way to guarantee' such a thing.

During the tumultuous periods right before and directly after the DD evacuation, she and another prominent male businessman in his fifties, Sachin, took it upon themselves to represent the interests of Hindus to the local district government:

We [Sachin and I] *did a lot of lobbying… The local government had put on their website that we had made a decision to move to another plot of land in Venserpolder, but we hadn't made that decision! We took it directly to the head of the council and she was shocked, because if the truth came out, it would be a political scandal, and it was before the election. Meanwhile, we had good contact with the mayor's office, and they wanted the temple. They travel every year to India to get Indian companies to invest, so they want to say 'Look what we are doing in Amsterdam for the Hindus!'*

Tina also told me that after the temple is erected, she would expect that the local district government would want votes from the Hindu community:

'*No politician is going to openly ask for votes. But the expectation will be there, and it's up to you how to play with that…We are victims now, but we won't be victims forever…the power is in these political issues, we are now becoming aware of this. Something big has to happen when things will change. Now after* [the closing of the DD temple] *there is a change* [in attitude] *on the temple board level and on the community level. Politicians are searching for connections with India and that brings us into a new* [advantageous] *position. Through the temple and everything, they* [the politicians] *can have better connections, if they want to sell Netherlands in India, this* [temple] *is one of the selling points, this political part is also a game we have to play…'*

Tina makes an important point that the community continually stressed to me: that the Hindu temple plays a strategic role in Amsterdam's connection with India. As a rising power on the world stage, friendly relations with India is a powerful bargaining tool that makes this a political rather than only a religious issue. The symbol of a purpose-built temple with the help and support of the government would send the right message to investors, tourists, and even recent professional migrants. While being 'Hindu' may be an abstract, universal, value-laden identity, many in the community also felt stressing the relationship between India and the Hindu temple in

Amsterdam Zuidoost is a 'political move' to make sure that they local government stays committed to finding a space.

Tina is not the only one to discuss so candidly the symbolic benefits for the country that a new Hindu temple could have. In a printed interview that circulated in the national newspaper *Het Parool* after the quickscan report was released, the third party actor drew attention to the fact that '*The Hindus of Zuidoost can be outstanding ambassadors to strengthen the relations between Amsterdam and India*' (2011).

Besides this strategic use of a Hindu temple as a symbol of positive economic and political relations, Tina felt that this experience had taught her how to better maneuver herself in political situations and come out with the 'upper hand'. Although she told me she had previous experience as a consultant managing and advising various influential groups, she felt that negotiating for a new temple space gave her renewed insight into how to present herself to politicians.

During a meeting with the local district government about possible sites for a new DD temple, she was told that a return to the site of the old DD temple would be costly and complicated. She told me she was 'unafraid' of being assertive that day, and made it clear that the politicians would be held responsible if they were caught mishandling the temple issue. Another very painful element of her narrative is that she had heard (from a source she did not reveal to me) that the DD temple had been moved so that a church could be established in its place. After receiving this information, she calmly attended a meeting with the local district government and made her position clear without revealing the knowledge she had acquired:

'*I was very smooth, I said to them: 'Okay, you say that if we return to the area of Devi Dhaam--if we take that plot we have to pay a lot because no other partners are there to build. I said 'I hope we will not see after 2, 3, months that there will be a partner building there, because then we'll see it as a deception', and 'deception' is a really strong word for Dutch people, I said 'I'm sorry if it's harsh but that's what I feel'. The political parties here are aware that this is a black area. They are getting votes in their churches. And I have proof they wanted to move DD temple so they can put a church there. That is painful, how can you move one people for the sake of other people?*[81]* The temple is also a holy space…Why do they have their church* [in the area]*? Because the politicians know if you give them something, you'll get votes…They are buying their votes in the church. And our old board members were not aware of these political games! Our community was not aware of this political influence…Nowadays it is important that the leaders of temples should be involved in society, should know the problems, should know about politics and how to play these political games.*

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[81] This point was not corroborated by local political actors, civil servant actors, or other members of the Hindu community who were involved in reinstating the DD temple.

Tina went on to tell me that Hindus, unlike other communities in Amsterdam Zuidoost, had lost the opportunity to play the 'political game' by disassociating themselves from politics for so long. What is more, she referred repeatedly to the 'low-education' levels of the former temple board members who did not understand how work with politicians as a major drawback to political lobbying and political representation in the past.

It was an unfounded rumour that a church would be built in the area, especially in light of the fact that religious buildings must be designated then approved according to zoning laws. However, it is significant to note how the unsettling language of multicultural and multi-faith competition continues to frame the position of Hindus post 2010, and how it is still formative in Tina's post 2010 narrative of political involvement.

At the end of our discussion about her involvement with local politics since the closing of the DD temple, Tina made a connection between her Hindu dharma and her political activity: *The biggest thing my involvement has allowed me to give* [to the community] *is to say to people is 'We have that* [DD temple] *ground back, we are able to build a temple, I see the temple almost standing there. Step by step we are reaching our goal!'*

I observed this kind of political awareness among priests as well. Mr. Ravi at the SSD temple wanted to encourage his devotees to take an interest in politics as Hindus: *'In European thinking, culture and religion can't be the same. That is because of the church. That's why they have tried to pull church and state apart. According to Hindus, politics is not above religion. Religions must control people and politics. Politics without dharma can't exist'.*

Given Mr. Ravi's vocal support of RSS and the BJP, at first glance it is tempting to read this as another attestment to his involvement in politicised religious groups. However, based on the context of our conversation, I resist foregrounding this interpretation as I feel that these comments relate more directly to the idea of Hindus becoming involved in political processes in the Netherlands. He did not make reference to addressing specifically 'Hindu' problems in politics, but to the fact that Hindus may not be compelled to exercise their right to vote or opportunities to influence local politics. At the same time, it is also clear that his involvement in groups that blur the boundaries between religion and politics allow him to speak with ease about the connection between Hindu religion and political involvement.

Another priest at SSD temple encouraged his devotees to take part in elections and exercise their voting rights, something that he saw as integral to Hinduism itself. As he told me, it is important to 'be part of the life of this country, we are not strangers here', and this included greater involvement in political issues.

Performing Political Awareness in the DD Office Space

Another important way that political awareness is tied expressly to templeisation processes in Zuidoost is the continued use of the DD office space. While members of the community like Tina involved themselves directly in politically lobbying, their relative ease and enthusiasm in doing so points out their access to the appropriate social and cultural capital to engage directly in 'the political game'.

However, for other members of the community from lower middle class and working class backgrounds, simply having the time to attend meetings and plan strategies was not an option, as many worked long hours, had to take care of elderly or young family members, and balance housework on top of these schedules. I now turn to the more 'emic' (Hurenkamp et al. 2012) constructions of activeness that involve more creative approaches to political involvement that are primarily taken on by first-generation migrants, many over the age of 65. This complicates the notion of well-stratified generational differences in relating to homeland and religious practices and highlights the intergenerational involvement (Hopkins et. al 2010) of the DD community in the negotiation of this emerging moral economy of active Hinduism.

I suggest here that the DD office space occupies a liminal space that 'turns subjects into citizens' (Isin 2009, 368), where everyday acts of sitting, discussing, and debating the future of the DD temple are articulated as a symbol of the fight to reinstate their temple space. The access to and continued use of the liminal space becomes a symbol of the struggle that the community has endured, as well as solidarity with the fight to restablish the DD temple space.

I observed that the DD community in the office narrated their struggle to build a temple to their position as former indentured labourers, much like the PBKS temple board's correspondence had aimed to do over twenty years ago. However, this time, the message did not focus on victimisation or oppression, but the strength of survival, adaptation, and hybridity that took place as indentured labourers made their journey to the Caribbean, newly producing their culture in a different milieu (Carter and Torabully 2002, 194).

As a middle-aged man named Shashi told me, he was continually motivated by the fact that their ancestors had 'come away from India to Suriname with nothing more than the Hanuman Chalisa[82]', and had built up a thriving Hindu community in the Caribbean. They felt that their commitment to establish a purpose-built temple in Amsterdam Zuidoost was an extension of their ancestor's work that had begun in Suriname.

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[82] This is an Awadhi devotional hymn dedicated to Hanuman, the monkey-god and friend to Rama, attributed to the 16th century sage, Tulsidas. Devotion to Hanuman is extremely popular in the Caribbean, relating back to patterns of worship in India. Tuesday evenings in temple spaces in the Netherlands are usually devoted to singing the Hanuman Chalisa. For more on Hanuman's popularity, see Lutgendorf (1997).

I observed that on festivals days when the temple was open, the priest would deliver an address after ritual offerings were made and devotional songs were sung. Often, he would retell a section of the *Ramcharitmanas* during a regular worship session in a temple, and connect this to fact that people should remain committed to the temple. Strains of this conversation could be heard as the night went on, as people sat on the floor and ate the meal that was provided, and stayed until almost midnight, cleaning and reorganising the space, sitting down on the couches and chatting about the latest status on the temple, and remembering the times that they had in their old space.

At the same time that these casual evening encounters facilitated nostalgia, they also were used to gather more support to re-establish the DD temple space. In this way, the office space operated as both a private space of worship as well as a conscious choice to participate in the public struggle of the DD temple cause.

On one occasion in 2014, a woman in her 40s named Kamala had come to the DD office space with her family. I had previously spoken to her at another temple space in the neighbourhood. As soon as she arrived, she busied herself with the other ladies, preparing bags of consecrated food and greeting people as they walked in. After the worship had finished and the priest had delivered an address, we all sat down, awaiting the young girls to walk by with a tray of food for our dinner. As the ladies talked and joked, a prominent member of the DD campaign asked Kamala candidly why she had been attending another temple space. Kamala looked visibly uncomfortable, but answered firmly that she attended another space because it was open on Thursday, the day she had chosen to worship. The prominent member of the community did not accept this, however, and maintained that Kamala should stay devoted to the cause of DD temple 'as a matter of principle'. Worshipping at other temple spaces undermined loyalty to the cause and the seriousness of the campaign strategy to get their temple space back.

A middle aged woman named Nina told me her involvement in DD was more than just a matter of praying. She came to the space and involved herself in the community because she was 'proud' of the cause she served. Although she had not considered herself very interested in politics before, the events at DD temple showed her how closely entwined were her politics and 'religious freedom'. She described her involvement in the DD cause as an 'accident', wherein her religious convictions had opened up the world of local politics and protest to her. As it was something she felt was 'so important for myself and my community' rather than shy away and find another temple space, she continued to make use of the office space whenever it was open.

'A Temple is a Temple': Worshipping Around the Neighbourhood
While I spoke to many first-generation and second-generation community actors about their articulation of the office space as a place of protest, there were also community members who

found this frustrating. One one occasion, I had seen my respondent Sheela, directly after the priest had given an address that highlighted the importance of visiting the office space to pray, rather than to visit spaces around the neighbourhood. When she saw me, she asked me if I had 'heard what he had said'. When I said yes, and that I found the idea quite interesting, she, looking visibly irritated, told me that 'she did not like being told where to pray'. 'A temple is a temple! It doesn't matter where you go, as long as you are filled with devotion'. She excused herself directly after she had received consecrated food, but I observed that she returned the next day.

Similarly, when I spoke to Amit, my respondent who frequents the LSHT temple, I asked him how he felt about the DD office space, and the continuing controversy in the neighbourhood to establish a purpose-built temple. He too, to my surprise said: 'For me, [a] temple is [a] temple.' He went on to explain that even if this is not a huge temple with a big OM outside the door or many rooms, it is still 'the place of gods'.

Although I have emphasised the temple as a public space of representation and the production of locality, these counter-narratives remind us of the importance that the individual relationship with the gods have for many of my respondents. Although temple worship is about public display and recognition, it is undoubtedly also about the individual experience of the divine (Malory 1995, Knott 2006, Nesbitt 2006, Nugteren 2009).

This reminder also links to the intimate connection between private and affective registers of political involvement and personal devotion. I now turn to the ways in which the narrative register of 'protecting the mother-goddess' has become crucial to the greater moral economy of active Hinduism among my first-generation working-class respondents in the office space. This again focuses on the corpothetic image of the deity, where the affective fusion of devotee and goddess causes a deep devotional bond that perpetuates the need to protest and protect her space in the neighbourhood.

As I described in chapter 5, the symbol of the crying mother is linked to the imagery of a violated *Bharat Mata.* I explore this idea further and discuss how the imagery of the goddess as mother, protector and political symbol come together in the DD office space, as many articulate their commitment to DD temple space as a commitment to protect their 'mother'.

As Dempsey (2006) notes, encounters of the miraculous and mystical in diaspora temples occur more often than one would assume. Especially in the case of goddess worship, forms of Hindu practice that are often relegated to 'folk' or 'superstitious' Hinduism such as possession and fanatical devotion (Erndl 2006, Waghorne 2004, Van der Veer 1988), tend to be downplayed in favour of a 'gentrification and democratisation' process to make the goddess a palatable, sophisticated deity rather than one associated with localised 'folk' practices (Waghorne 2004, 135).

Waghorne's study of the gentrification of village goddesses in Tamil Nadu demonstrates that renovations of goddess shrines in Tamil Nadu are increasingly undertaken by self-described 'middle class' communities (2004, 129) who emphasise the benign and protective elements of the goddess, rather than her role as a 'murderous wife' (Harman in Waghorne 2006, 133). In the course of my fieldwork, I have observed goddess possession and ecstatic moments of devotion in temple spaces in the Hague, alluding to a process more complex and accommodating than gentrification in goddess worship. However I did not witness any possessions or ecstatic devotional behaviours in my research in Amsterdam.

Many of my respondents who continue to worship in the office describe a strong ecstatic and mystical attraction to the deities, particularly the statue of the goddess Durga. As Fibiger (2012) notes, the nature of goddess-based traditions in Hinduism themselves offer various possibilities of imagining the goddess. Noting Bose's (2010) four 'functions of the goddess'—as destroyer, protector, ideal helper or wife, and nurturing mother (Bose 2010 13, Erndl 2006), Fibiger sees these four functions and their reconciliation within the figure of the goddess as particularly significant in the diaspora context: they demonstrate the adaptability of the goddess to new situations and cultural milieus (Fibiger 201, 31).

21: The Goddess Durga of Devi Dhaam (Author's image)

I suggest that the continued visits to the DD temple are often motivated

by my respondents' 'love' for the goddess, which translates also into a politicised devotion to her cause (Ramaswamy 1997, 97, 2010). Many DD community members connect with the corpothetics of the goddess at the DD office space, using the symbolic relationship between mother and child to articulate their ongoing visits to the DD office space. Trips to the temple were not just to meet members of the community, but to 'visit mom' as some devotees put it to me during our conversations. These visits, as outlined above, serve the dual purpose of connecting the devotee with the divine while also reinforcing and commemorating the 2010 closing of the DD temple space.

At the DD temple, the role of the goddess as a nurturer but also as powerful protector have become important frames with which many respondents describe their commitment to reinstating the DD temple space. For many who continue to attend the office, they feel that the government will have worked in vain to move the goddess from her space, as it is only a matter of time before she will return. One afternoon at Tina's house, I spoke to her and her husband about the continued effort they both put in to the DD campaign. I had asked Tina how she had managed to stay motivated to reinstate the DD temple for so many years. In the end, Tina said, whether or not to participate in the campaign was not a situation over which she felt she had 'control'. There was no way that the government could keep them away from the space for much longer, as the goddess' will was to return. In the end, Tina felt that it was the 'the power of our Mother' that compelled her to stay involved for so long.

Sonia, a woman in her 40s from Paramaribo who had worked hard to keep the DD temple open, had supported the move to the office so that the goddess could be 'comfortable' again. She narrated for me the mystical experience she had had years earlier with the goddess in the former DD temple space. During Diwali celebrations many years ago, she had been sitting quietly and praying. The temple was almost empty at it was about to be closed. She sat in meditation with her eyes closed, and when she slowly opened them, she saw 'Durga's eyes flash bright like shimmering lights'. From then on, she felt a special connection with the deities of Devi Dhaam. She said that from this moment, she realised that 'her mom lives here [in the temple].' She went on to tell me that when they received the news that the DD temple was closing, she felt 'lost, as a kid [would]', and cried to herself, fretting over how to move forward.   In the end, she decided there was no way she could turn away from the goddess, and continued to visit the office space in order to keep 'mata's' legacy alive in Zuidoost.

On one Navratri evening, I spoke to Mr. Kumar, one of the oldest and most respected members of the Hindu community. He was born in Lahore, and had vivid memories of the

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Partition in the city. He recalled for me how the Hindu community in Lahore had reached out to neighbouring villages with Hindu populations in order to give them safe haven during the violent and unstable period directly after Partition, before he and his family relocated to Delhi. As an adult, he had come to the Netherlands after spending some years in the 1960s in Norway. He moved to Amsterdam while waiting for his brother to sponsor him to go to Canada. However, his brother was not able to successfully sponsor him to move, so he settled in the Netherlands and opened a restaurant.

He was instrumental in supporting the idea of a Hindu temple in Amsterdam Zuidoost, although he told me he felt reluctant to take a leading role, because he felt his Dutch language skills were not good enough. He told me he depended on members of the Hindustani community to communicate through the official channels to arrange a space for a temple. In turn, Mr. Kumar travelled to India to purchase and ensure the safe delivery of the deities of the Devi Dhaam temple, to be installed in 1997. After 2010, he still visited the Devi Dhaam deities in the office to pray. He told me he had a deep attachment to the deities because he had been so invested in choosing them and shipping them. Like many others, he was grateful that they had been moved to a safe space where they could continue to be worshipped. He felt that the goddesses' presence had been established as soon as the deities were moved, and that even without a proper temple he was able to worship them as he had before 2010. However, he told me that he continued to come to the DD temple, especially during festival days (even though I had seen him at other temple spaces as well). He told me again that 'I'm here now because I have a strong attachment to these deities, and I will always come because she is my *mata* [mother]'.

In the same way, one of elderly female respondents named Janaki told me that she always came to DD office space in order to 'show everyone that I will not turn my back on *mata*'. Although she strongly felt that all temples were good, pure spaces in which to worship, visiting the office was a way of reaffirming her commitment to the goddess and the greater task of finding a new temple space in which she can be installed.

While the Hindu 'model minority' has been seen as politically dormant, but socio-economically successful, the views of my respondents suggest that being 'Hindu' is an active, challenging pursuit that cannot be divorced from their relationship to others and the world. Furthermore, since the events of 2010, ritual, belief and cultural heritage have been recast and in some cases, even supplanted by the emerging moral economy of active Hinduism that focuses on behaviours that reinforce the constant struggle to 'belong' to the Hindu community.

While Tina's narrative tells us how a well-educated, upper-middle class community used her social capital to develop a sense for lobbying and 'political games', the continued allegiance to

the DD office space and mother-goddess by my lower-middle and working class respondents shows a more intimate but equally determined form of political awareness that is symbolised through 'mom' and her right to 'go home' to her temple in Amsterdam Zuidoost. The act of visiting the temple therefore becomes a complex negotiation of one's right as a citizen to protest, and to also foster greater personal intimacy with the divine.

I now return to various temple spaces around Amsterdam Zuidoost to explore in chapter 8 how these spaces have attempted to formalise the values of democratic participation and transparency through activities and the organisation of temple spaces.