



# The Bath of the Deities: Considerations on the Sacred in a Hare Krishna Ritual

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## Abstract

Starting from a reflection on the concept of the sacred, in this article I intend to address how a spiritual practice of Indian origin, the so-called bath of the Deities, can contribute to this debate. For this purpose, an ethnographic description of the event in question will be taken as an object, in order to provoke a debate with authors such as Emile Durkheim, Arnold Van Gennep and others who focus more specifically on Hinduism, such as Gavin Flood and Lúcio Valera.

**Keywords:** Sacred; Ritual; Hinduism; Deities

## Introduction

The gift work he has per goal to introduce a review criticism and comparison between aspects of Durkheim E [1] texts and Van G [2], having as a reflective axis the discussion around the notion of sacred. In addition, I will also try to think about how this debate can be enriched from the consideration of the sacred as expressed in a devotional ritual performed by Brazilian members of one of the branches of so-called traditional Hinduism, Gaudiya Vaishnavism as experienced by members of the Hare Krishna movement.

More broadly, through a theoretical reflection, the aim is to develop tools for to understand and do emerge the type in world sacred what The practice specific that I take as a reflective object establishes. In this sense, the first part of this text presents a version of the respective notions theories about the sacred that will be thematized here, based on the aforementioned authors. The intention is to make it possible, through their mutual reverberation, to outline a type in sacred any less overdeterminant and more fit The consider seriously The perception place of mode fur which an dimension cosmology considered transcendental becomes real and concrete in a public event determined.

In the second part I will present a description of an *abhiseka* (bath or ceremonial ablution to a Deity) performed at the Hare Krishna Temple in Curitiba, capital of the state of Paraná, in the southern region of Brazil. The production of this description it is part of research process for my thesis doctorate, in which I intend to think about the relationship between emotion and devotion from the Hare Krishna devotional festivals. During my field research i have produced texts descriptive from festivals what I participate being the snippet what it will be presented here a fragment of one of these productions textual. In the third and final part, I will outline a reflective interweaving between the appropriations of sacred suggested at first part and elements from the description ethnographic seeking out to offer a path for an possible approximation about gives formation gives form and the specific worlds that this process intersects with the ritual in question.

## Part I

In “Elementary Forms of Religious Life” Durkheim E [1] propose what the sacred would be directly linked to society. This category and the experience of divine associated with it would actually be specific states of manifestation of the own

social relations, made emotionally tangible and representable by collective effervescence propitiated ritual. Due to this conception he would be possible to claim what The ritual it could be considered as a state of collective life in which it would become possible to create and experience of the sacred by the members of a given society, would be "in these effervescent social circles and from that very effervescence that seems to have been born religious idea" [1].

T describes aspects that give life relational seasonally oriented from aborigines, he considers as the overexcitement caused by these meetings periodic would be directly on the production of the sense of sacredness in participants. The sacred would thus be that which, like the ideal, would be added to the real, and its origin would be associated with this social aspect of nature human due to the fact that it emanates precisely from these intense forms of gathering of consciousnesses focused on the same object, as in rituals. . By being marked by this emotional and tangible experience of society transcendental what him outside - but of which it is a part - the human being, for Durkheim, would participate in a double existence, thus having a double nature. There would be two beings in man, an individual being (which would have its base in the organism and which would thus have an extremely limited circle) and another, social, which would represent the highest reality in the human, in the intellectual and moral order, or that is, society itself. This dual nature of man would then be at the basis of existence of the sacred and the profane.

That distinction he would be so precisely fruit in a need to represent outside of us the external forces that constrain us externally [1]. The sacred and the profane would thus be, in this perspective, two different kinds of realities (also called mental states), separated by a line in demarcation clearly established. It is this distinction would have an importance central for the development of thought itself, which one would work from systems of classificatory representation of the world. Since the sacred-profane distinction is the origin of representational capacities qualifying through of which are opera The thought human, The religion and the experience religious would be connected to what we could call in shapes elements of knowledge.

Arnold Van G [2], in his work "Rites of Passage", he works also with the notion of sacred and its relationship with rituals, similarly considered as moments critics give life Social human. At the however, to produce your reflection from a perspective of sequentially that author considers what The sense of sacred would not be in essence, as for Durkheim, but in its relative position, inserted in a system of relationships in motion.

Less interested in origins and more focused on passages,

Van G [2] also considers what in between the world profane and the sacred there would be an incompatibility. This would mean that the passage between one and the other could not be done without an intermediate stage or, in other words, without being accompanied in formalities magical-religious. It is precisely to focus in your analyze and examples these moments of crossing that this author presents a notion of sacred more dynamics and rotating, in which it is presented as a value that indicates respective situations, and not as an absolute value. This particular notion of the sacred is linked to the perception of society as a house full of different rooms, the fulfilment of human life being a constant passage and displacement between them.

THE door It is The limit in between The foreign world and the domestic world, when it comes to a common dwelling, and between the profane and sacred, at the case in a Temple (...) So, 'pass through The threshold' means joining in a new world [2].

His particular perspective allows this author to think about communicability and transition in between worlds. To promote an Warning for openings who has the character in margin him suggests The need in if reflect about of value sacred threshold. It is in order to thematize the passage or interaction between worlds that he presents his theory of ritual sequentiality. According to her, there would be sequentiality three moments' invariants: you rites in separation of world previous (preliminary), you rites executed during The state in margin (injunctions) and you rites in aggregation to new world (post-injunctions). These three stages would be present whenever there was a ritual passage from one world to another, beyond from that would allow the approximation of sacred as something what it presents different levels of depth.

## Part II

The event described below took place on September 17 at Hare Temple Krishna in Curitiba, located at Street duke in Caxias number 76 in the center history of Curitiba. This temple, despite being in this location for over ten years, has been through several addresses since its founding in the city, at the end of the 1990s. 1970. It is part of an institution known as ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), founded in 1966 by swami Bengali known as AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. This institution, currently administered and conducted by the disciples of founding master aims to spread the practice of bhakti-yoga, known as yoga in devotion, such as fulfilled by the followers in Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, considered as an avatar of Krishna who lived in the region of West Bengal, India, about 530 years ago. Through this incarnation, Krishna would have established the chanting of the maha mantra Hare Krishna

Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, as the process spiritual more adequate for The cycle cosmic at the which, second at Vedic scriptures, now we would meet. Through the chanting of this maha-mantra it would be possible to obtain the purification of consciousness that would allow the person who practices it to realize his spiritual nature eternal well as The relationship loving with God inherent The Is it over there, something which, from the perspective of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, would make possible liberation from the cycle of births and deaths (samsara).

THE Realization in festivals periodicals It is part gives practice and of daily devotional From practitioners gives bhakti-yoga, or, devotional service as this expression has been translated by AC Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada. Usually are performed in days special events of the Vedic calendar (of lunar orientation) in which the advent (or birthday) of one of the many forms of the supreme personality of God, Krishna. These days they are visas as particularly auspicious for those who wish to deepen their devotion, because in them it would be possible to be more close to understanding the transcendental character of the appearance of such personalities.

That day I arrived at the temple at exactly 6 pm, time for the marked the beginning of the festival. Unlike the two previous parties that I observed, this time I did not participate in the preparations. The temple door was open to receive visitors and devotees still performed some preparations for the start of the party. Right at the entrance, in the room that commonly serves as a dining room and through which necessary to pass to gain access to the stairs that lead to the altar room, a group of female devotees, duly dressed in their sarees, had covered two tables of plastic with cloths to make there the garlands that would be offered posteriorly at Deities. Formed so a colourful scene of reception to those who arrived at the beginning of the festival, the flowers spread over the table, the garlands ready and the bundles placed in large buckets of water white to your side contrasted with the colour of the sarees and the fallen leaves floor. To ride up the living room of Temple, having already withdrawn the shoes I noticed what you devotees already there were started the corner of mantra. There were approximately twenty people, and during this first stage were more and more visitors and outside devotees arriving.

During the initial forty minutes of this first stage, three devotees took turns leading the chant, each giving a brief explanation about the meaning of the mantra and the specific day of the festival. Those responsible for lead The chant They were at the floor, of side direct gives living room of Temple. Sitting on colourful pillows, with their heads shaved, adorned with sacred clay (*tilaka*) on the forehead and dressed in their

Indian robes. Just the devotee who played the harmonium and lead the singing had a microphone in front of him, the other instruments didn't they were amplified. Formed so the trio basic music instruments traditional Bengali, the *mrdanga* (clay drum) conducting the variations and intensities of the rhythm, the *kartala* (cymbal) beating the rhythm and (as the devotees consider it) tearing the ether with the sibylline sound of its trill and the harmonium accompanying and supporting the singing melody.

Before starting, the first of the singers said:

“we spend our lives in search of external pleasure and we are always frustrated, Krishna is *atmarama*, what means what him *if satisfies in yes same*, seeking out pleasure internally. Radharani is the personification of this pleasure potency and is therefore an emblem of devotional service. When we chant Hare in the Maha Mantra Hare Krishna is to her what we are us referring, asking what we us can approach in Krishna through the service...”

This first devotee sang for a short time, as he assumed in the microphone, I had little experience with the harmonium. He took over the *kartalas* and spent the harmonium to the next devotee, while a third continued to lead rhythm on the clay drum. THE second devotee, who sang, before starting, emphasized the importance of singing along, to better feel the benefits of the mantra. Talked about mantra meditation being a other world with relationship that one what usually we imagine with being meditation, in it, instead of seeking silence, we must concentrate on the sound and in the meaning of the word we are singing.

Despite that the melodies sung are exotic and relatively complex, The repetition of the same along the rhythmic flow skilfully conducted by the musicians, as well as the enthusiasm of some other devotees present at the situation, made with what The sing little bit The little bit if spread in between you gifts, many of which passed to keep pace with palms.

The third devotee to lead the chanting, presented by his precedent as being the ‘official singer’, he just thanked everyone for coming and started his singing. Was the sang at melodies more elaborate and difficult, despite that were those most enthused those present. To termination of this programming stage, after a brief conversation between them, a devotee was invited to lead the chant. This devotee is not a resident of Temple, although from that the frequents already there is Many years old and It is recognized for its skill and talent as a singer. Before she started, one of the devotees who had been chanting earlier - what had sung for the first time and was the most eloquent in expressing himself - he explained in microphone for you present in which the next

stage of the program would consist, called the *Abhiseka*, or bath of the Deities.

Him it started making a comparison in between the process of service devotional and astronaut training. Just as these need to go through previous situations to get used to the atmospheric condition they will encounter in space, in the same way devotees prepare themselves to be able to return to world spiritual getting used to with The atmosphere in there, The which is imbued with love and loving and unconditional service to Krishna. This preparation and training is realized through the daily practice of devotional service. In that sense there would be activities that would have the purpose of getting the practitioner used to this atmosphere spiritual. The daily process of worshipping the deities, which consists of waking them up, bathe them, massage them, dress them, feed them and adore them with songs, flowers and incense would be one of them.

According to the devotee, all this interchange with the Deity, the Personal form of Krishna, it is very confidential and intimate, but on festival days visitors to the temple has the opportunity to carry out this type of act, which in general is done only per brahmins. Finishing your presentation, he stated that by executing the simple act of bathing the Deity one gets a lot of *sukrti* (piety), a kind of pious balance that allows us to advance spiritually. He explained the term as being something what if refers the acts what confer a balance positive in our 'spiritual savings'. Thus bathing the Deity would have the potential to purify the heart and increase intimacy between the one who performs that act and Krishna.

Before beginning the chant, the devotee who played the harmonium invited everyone to sing along with her, because singing would also be a way of bathing the Deity. Your corner presented features miscellaneous with relationship previously realized, used the harmonium more as a harmonic bed than as melodic accompaniment, investing in more melodies sweets and simple.

While the devotee did the explanation for you visitors about what consisted bathe the Deity, was prepared in front to altar the space for Realization of bath. The altar what had been open to long gives first stage now was closed and a kind of curtain with a burgundy cloth with golden details was improvised in between the table Where if would give the bath and you gifts. I went guest for to be a From two devotees what held The cloth While The brahmin he prepared the Deities of Radha and Krishna to be bathed, all this happened while the chant was going on.

Although on festival days it becomes an activity open to the public, the bathing the Deities remains an intimate activity. The cloth serves as a interdiction between the public world

and the intimate world of contact with the Deities, for behind of cloth what awake The curiosity From gifts The young brahmin (currently The leader and responsible practical fur Temple) exchange at clothes of Deities, stripping them of their ornate garments so that, in simpler be bathed fur public.

As soon as the divine couple (present here in two small forms bronze anthropomorphic statues of approximately 40 centimeters) was ready, the curtain was lowered, at which point the chanting of the maha-mantra intensified and many of those present, myself included, bowed their heads to the floor. Some muttered the mantra greeting their master, others just prostrated in silence.

As people were raised, little by little they were formed. Little, as the singing went on melodiously, two lines, one of men - on the right side - and one for women - on the left side. A Devotee and a Devotee They passed The help with the procedure. With a small copper spoon they dripped some drops in Water at hand right gives person what was at turn after bathing the deity <sup>2</sup>, the person was then indicated to deposit this water in a small stainless steel basin located on the floor, which has the function of counting the water used to decontaminate gifts.

Having passed through this quick but indispensable process of purification the person receives a small white whelk in his hand - a type of bone considered pure and auspicious by the Vedas - which was formerly located on a tiny copper tripod, with details in Peacock feather placed on the table.

The conch was then filled by the brahmana with warm water, ghee, honey or yogurt. With the right hand, the one that had been previously decontaminated, the person could anyway bathe The couple transcendental, making Slide The liquid contained in the shell over the transcendental bodies of the Deities there material and mercifully disposed to devotion. Some people start gently by the foot, others dump abruptly through the head, and the time of the action ends up varying depending on the element what it is being used. These candy waste they go then if accumulated into the basin over which the Deities are stationed, and per a hole what he takes The an big jar, located under gives table - previously prepared with this mechanism used to store this type of concrete mercy known as *caranamrta*, leftover water, flowers, honey and yogurt used to bathe the Deity.

Upon completion of the quick rite, the person is given a towel to dry their hands. You devotees what already know the procedure bow after having accomplished the ritual bath, some visitors also do the same, repeating the movement from devotees more old. While at people go, one by one, bathing

the Deities, the chant continues and takes on an increasingly lilting and excited.

After all those present have bathed the Deities, the cloth is again extended in front of them for two devotees, for what have your clothes again exchanged. As the chant continues, the brahmin finishes his bath with Water warm, pulling out gently all your remnants in honey or yogurt that are still there, with a small cotton towel dry your divine bodies, rub some aromatic oil over them and dress them sumptuously, with delicate props golden adorning your robes lilacs. The Water flavoured from this final bath oozes together with the ghee and honey to form nectar.

Cloth is removed: Krishna with his flute and Radharani dancing beside him offer those present their transcendental vision, their beauty to fill the eyes. THE chant intensifies, ending with the return of the Deities to the altar.

### Part III

As stated by the devotee who announced the stage of the festival described above, the ritual bathing was intended to create an atmosphere similar to that found in the world spiritual. Thus, the purpose of the ritual, understanding it as machinery through of which many different spheres cosmological they can if intersect, it could to be understood as the act of giving concreteness to a specific relational mode through which the atmosphere in Vrndavana (The world spiritual) be likely to if do gift at concreteness of the material world which, transmuted by the practice of service, serves him even as a passage to the transcendental dimension.

For to understand it is notion an fast reflection about at words Sanskrit words for festival and holy place can be useful to us. The Sanskrit word *Utsava*, used to refer to festivals, means elevation, suggesting that the festival around propitiating a collective purification would be able to bring all participants closer gives dimension spiritual [3]. One Temple Where if practice bhakti-yoga (service directed to the satisfaction of God) is held to be a holy place and to be refer the This one status in a place specific The term in Sanskrit used It is *tirtha*, which means ford, or place of crossing.

These expressions denote The nature dualistic gives cosmology gaudiya-vaishnava, The reality It is constituted per two spheres cosmological different in nature: The world spiritual (*stop Dhama*), eternal abode of Krishna and his intimate associates from which all creation and the material world emanate. (*Jagat*), inescapably subject the temporality and at miseries inherent to her [3]. The temple, as a kind of liminal site (being situated between both spheres) promotes activities through which it would be possible to operate the passage from one dimension to another.

In that sense, inspiring us in Durkheim E [1], we can consider a Hare Krishna temple as a place to collectively promote the experience of the sacred. But, instead of sharing the Durkheimian paradox of assuming the notion of society as being prior to its genesis (bearing in mind that the ritual produces and to same time represents The society), we could search The relationality present and expressed in the object of study (in this case a Hare Krishna) and not interpose before her a over determined element.

Durkheim E [1] proposed that we look at religion and the sacred as eminently collective manifestations, however this social that stands out at parties is different in each relational conjuncture. In this perspective, the temple, as a collective crossing site, could be observed from the way from the practices express a type in relationality private what become possible, on its own terms, the passage between different worlds.

As indicated in the first part, this passage between worlds has its tangibility enhanced by the ritual sequentiality invariants pointed out by Van G [2]. These steps, by bringing our attention to the passages, allow us to perceive that the proposal of the ritual briefly described above aims to lead the participant in different levels of pragmatic depth of the sacred.

So, before in ride up the living room of Temple It is necessary withdraw you shoes. To ride up the steps that give access to the room the devotees usually play a bell and so you participants they go being driven in successive steps that go deeper the intimacy of contact gives person for with the divinity. So we can to notice the mode fur which The cloth institutes The rhythm of relationship gives Deity with The community, gives intimacy transcendental of the deal more intimate in between they and The brahmin, for The exhibition public at which, across your shape possible to be visualized has the mercy of your form before your devotees. Through of suggestions in Van G [2] we can see as the sacred it is modulated through in many different levels of intimacy, likely to be accessed through ritual purification of that who craves grow crops this relationship.

Based on what was said above, we can consider that creative uses of classical conceptualizations about the notion of sacred can still be useful for help us in concrete situations of ritual practice. In the case of Durkheim E [1], his main contribution perhaps it is us Call Warning for dimension collective and shared religious experience while, from the reading of Van G [2], we can become more attentive to pragmatic passages and modulations in between The sacred and profane at the context specific in what these transactions occur.

One of the ideas of this text is to suggest how the idea of Hinduism, as practiced in this particular ritual, can contribute to the debate about the sacred. As Halbfass puts it, when using Hinduism as a category, we have to keep in mind that

The unity of Hinduism is a modern postulate, a product of Neo-Hinduism. It is essentially inspired by apologies and nationalisms proclaimed by the leaders of Neo-Hinduism and adopted to some extent outside India. In fact, the unity of traditional Hinduism is only a geographical unity; and Hinduism itself basically amounts to a group of religions that coexist in the same geographic region and exhibit several characteristics in common, but with much more signs of division and antagonism.

Such a statement helps us understand why Hare Krishna devotees do not designate themselves as Hindus, operating what Valera L [4] designated, in his doctoral thesis, as a way of thinking characteristic of traditional Hinduism<sup>1</sup>. There is an emphasis on the connection with a specific lineage (vaishnava, shaiva or shakta) rather than the so-called neo-Hinduism<sup>2</sup>, this modern synthesis produced as a reaction to British colonial domination.

In fact, Neo-Hinduism and Traditionalist Hinduism are not precise systems, but two distinct mental attitudes. It may even happen that the same person combines elements of both ways of thinking. Traditional Hinduism assimilates and absorbs external elements in a very different way from Neo-Hinduism. Unlike the latter, it maintains a living continuity with the past. Even in the past, Hindu groups already absorbed elements from abroad. They certainly changed the face of these groups' religion. But at the same time most of its old values remained alive as before.

From this citation, we can see that the point that would distinguish these two ways of thinking would be linked to the way in which each would relate to otherness-the relationship with foreign people and ideas. While the flourishing of devotional traditions, such as Gaudiya Vaishnavism, would

be linked to some extent to a response to the presence of Muslim emperors in India, neo-Hinduism offers, to a certain extent - as shown by Silveira- a response to the domination British. However, this does not mean that the lineages that would integrate the so-called traditional Hindu way of thinking would not have had to, in turn; also offer a response to British colonialist modernization. Thus, we can suggest, seeking to contribute to this debate, that one of the elements that would distinguish these two ways of thinking would be the very foundations on which the possibility of a non-sectarian universalism, of openness towards the other, is built.

While neo- Hinduism has the idea of an impersonal absolute (*Brahman*) as the basis for articulating the aggregation of multiplicities, the so-called agamic traditions would equate this relationship between one and multiplicity by stating that the basis of this transcendental absolute, which unifies the diversity of matter, would be a divine person (Krishna, Shiva or Shakti) full of transcendental attributes with unlimited capacity to expand in multiple dimensions to create, sustain and destroy the cosmic creation.

Another question that we can raise from the quote above is: how is the so-called 'living continuity with the past' produced, in particular ethnographic contexts, which would characterize the way of thinking of so-called traditional Hinduism? Realizing that the so-called traditional Hinduism also had to respond to the presence of others and transformation, in search of its permanence, the question could perhaps be formulated in the sense of asking how this continuity with a past is produced as a living presence in the present of practitioners of Hinduism, Devotion.

Thus, despite these polysemic noises, following a proposition made by Flood G [3], Hinduism, despite not being a category in the classical sense, an 'essence defined by certain properties', is still valid as a reflective category if we consider that there are, however, 'prototypical forms of Hindu practices and beliefs'. In this sense, Hinduism could be thought of as a prototypical category, which means that it can be thought of as a category with open borders, with different levels of belonging to it.

Thus, even though the members of the movement do not designate themselves as Hindus or practitioners of Hinduism, I consider the use of such a category valid, under the conditions set out above, because it allows establishing connections between this contemporary manifestation and other South Asian religious practices.

In fact, the tradition in which the Hare Krishna movement is inserted, based on the teachings of Prabhupada, in the lineage of Gaudiya Vaishnavism of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu,

1 'It can be seen that there is a very clear distinction between traditional Hinduisms and Neo-Hinduism. The former do not accept being labeled as Hinduism, but the designation of their own tradition. For them there is not one Hinduism', but several Hinduisms'. Therefore, theologically speaking, they would be Vaiṣṇavas, śaivas, śāktas or smārtas, but not Hindus.'

2 The term 'neo-Hinduism', as used by Paul Hacker, refers to the interpretation of Hinduism by Hindus in response to the interests of the non-Hindu West, and using Western terminology and assumptions. For example, Hacker claims that William James influenced Radhakrishnan, and Vivekananda was influenced by Paul Deussen, a disciple of Schopenhauer. Hacker contrasts Neo-Hinduism with surviving traditional Hinduism', which is opposed to any Western interpretation of Hinduism. (...) Although Neo-Hinduism is not a unified system of thought, it gives us the idea that the true nature of Hinduism would be 'universalism' or 'radical eclecticism'.

would be characterized by opposing the so-called 'caste Brahmanism', by stating that the condition of Brahmin, and even more the position of Vaishnava, could be obtained through conduct and training and not through birth. Thus, he initiated disciples who in the social context of the time were considered without caste, for being of Muslim origin, such as Haridas Thakura and the brothers Rupa and Sanatana Goswami.

Such a posture, which found its cosmological engine in the Harinama (congregational chant of the maha-mantra), created ways for Hinduism—a system of thought and religion created as a response to the British colonialist invasion—to come to the fore from the 19th century onwards. Become, in one of its Vaishnava currents, a Universalist religion, which means that it would be open to the entry of different people regardless of their condition of origin<sup>3</sup>.

In the view of the so-called 'smart Brahmanism', traditions originating from the Vedas are ideally propagated through family transmission, preaching being overseas—as did those who spread the Vedas in the West, such as Vivekananda (1863-1902), Yogananda (1893-1952) and Prabhupada (1896-1977)—considered not only impossible but also, to some extent, contaminating.

The Hare Krishna movement, following parameters established by its founder, does not deny Brahmanical orthodoxy<sup>4</sup>, nor the purification process involved in it, however, its peculiarity (in view of the broader picture of South Asian religions) would be the fact of expanding access to such a process, as was characteristic of the devotional movements (*bhakti*) that erupted in India between the 12th and 15th centuries AD. Another central characteristic is expressed in the way this idea of purity is understood and, more than that, pragmatically sought in the different ritual interactions which give the rhythm of devotional life.

While in caste Brahmanism, which even influences far-right nationalist ideologies present in Indian politics at the same time, purity takes on an ethnic and even racial bias, Gaudiya Vaishnavism sees purification as a cultivation of consciousness, being a process of developing a superior taste to which everyone should and could have access, through the daily experience of disciplines and practices aimed at this

3 For more information about the universalization of Vaishnavism see: Silveira, "Do Renascimento Hindu à Countercultura." 1999 GT 16, ANPOCS.

4 "There are two fundamental distinctions that run through the history of Hindu society: on the one hand, the distinction between purity (*śauca*, *śudhi*) and pollution (*aśauca*, *aśudhi*) and, on the other hand, the distinction between auspiciousness (*sūbha*, *mangala*) and inauspiciousness (*aśubha*, *amangala*). The scale measuring purity and pollution is a status hierarchy scale corresponding to the caste hierarchy, with Brahmins at the top and Dalits at the bottom. Hindu society organizes itself from this base"

purpose.

Thus, although the founder of the Hare Krishna movement considered his temples 'like schools of Brahmins', access to training would be open to different people, regardless of their origin, gender, caste or race. The very fact that, in the field note that begins this text, a Brazilian devotee is on the streets of a city in Latin America on a 'preaching mission' would already express this perception of the openness of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, which, breaking this perspective of intra caste family transmission.

This can be seen as a characteristic of the universalist strand of Hindu traditions, considering that the idea of purity and, ultimately, the condition of *arya* (noble), would be a moral condition and not a racial one. This would evidently be a foundation for people not born in Bharata Varsa (the traditional name of India) to seek the benefits of the practices and rituals proposed by the scriptures. Masters such as Dayananda Sarasvati, Vivekananda, Yogananda, Bhaktisidhanta and Prabhupada, despite philosophical differences, were critical of the myth of the Aryan invasion and, consequently, of the racial reading of the distinctions established by the social system of *varna* and *ashram*.

To a certain extent, the life of the movement has a rhythm dictated by missionary and devotional action, by preaching in the streets and attending to the Deities at the altar, a process that has its culmination in festivals. Such situations offer the temporality of devotion in terms of which the bodies experience another ontology, as they are cyclically arranged in the particular sequence of each feast.

The issue of time is central, both for the practical production of associations around the search for the nectar to be offered to the Deities, and for the very taking of photography as reflective material, a preserved instant capable of being thawed in the associations that are set in motion.

The exchange, in the practice of good living Hare Krishna, or, in the search for nectar, has many instances and entrances. The gift is fuel, to a certain extent, for community life, with missionary practice being simultaneously a mythical and economic place, simultaneously fundamental for the material functioning of the community and for socialization in its central values. The practice of distributing books on the streets, being the engine of such symbolic and practical transactions, is configured as a field for experiencing emotional experiences that intensify devotion, by giving meaning to the engagement itself.

Festivals, in their return to fundamental points, through their multiple means and performances, make practical,

experiential and corporeal a notion of time and rhythm in relation to which being is also constituted. Elias showed us how closely the notion of I is linked to the interdependence relationships that constitute a we in relation to which possibilities of representing the person are configured. I suggest that, in addition to these influences, another key issue in this process of collective constitution of the notion of person is the perspective of time, which is incorporated through a series of parallelisms, which go through fasts, mythical narratives and austerities.

This proposal is based on the Durkheimian suggestion according to which the fundamental categories of human perception, such as time and space, contrary to being absolute as suggested by Kant, are a result of social configurations, which make them viable and possible.

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/1965), Durkheim E [1] argued that categories of understanding in the Kantian sense, the conceptual means by which people think, are socially constructed: space is the geographical extent of the group; time, its patterns of periodic reassembly; the causal force takes its prototype from the mana or religious Power, which is, in effect, the moral pressure of group emotion; the category schemes that divide the universe do so originally on the model of totemic emblems that mark belonging to social groups and the boundaries between them [5].

This means launching the hypothesis that, considering that the fundamental categories of understanding are socially constructed, and not naturally determined, a certain state of interdependence relations has the potential to throw the person into a different way of feeling and determining what is the reality. The key point is that Durkheimian analysis provides not just sociology of knowledge, but sociology of morals. This will lead us to the sociology of emotions capable of explaining the passions of justice, retribution and rebellion, a sociology that encompasses both anger and love [5].

If anthropology can be, as Tim Ingold suggests, *'philosophy with people in'*, the philosophy of others ceases to be something that necessarily refers to an abstract world of ideas. The Western way of imagining philosophy, in view of the way in which it has developed, places it at an abstract pole and, generally, in opposition to practice. Criticizing this perspective as a knowledge project, Bourdieu P [6] in his Pascalian meditations presented an effort of objectification and immanence in dealing with social things, in a kind of return to practice.

This epistemic posture started from a critique of scholastic thought, which, according to the author in question, was elaborated from a possibility of being detached from

the practical and pragmatic urgencies of the lived world, projecting this same condition in the observed or thought relationships. Thus, this specific and privileged situation would make, according to Bourdieu, some philosophers place an excess of confidence in the power of discourse, to the point that these people experience "revolutions in the order of words as if they were a revolution in the order of things [6]".

It is important to observe that a statement like this acquires its power when considered in an ontological perspective in which words and things are established as intrinsically distinct. This criticism has direct implications for sociological practice which, according to this orientation, should focus on the immanence of practice and the pragmatics of what is experienced in order to produce a specific type of objectification. However, by emphasizing one of the opposition poles, I consider (humbly) that Bourdieu P [6] remains attached to the premises of the very thought he criticized, for which there is in fact an opposition between philosophy and practice. This makes their return to practice happen through a premise that it would be possible to find an underlying truth to them, inaccessible or invisible to the agents themselves, just as a player does not need to think at all times about the rules he operates (which doesn't mean he doesn't do it at another time). Such a distinction may not exist for others, for whom a way of thinking may be inherently related to a way of living that makes such a point of view possible.

Pure thought as a project remains when we seek in the practices of others our way of defining the reality (of thought) that we also intend to be theirs, when we do not consider the efforts of others in the sense of giving meaning to such acts. By opening ourselves up to taking seriously what others say about their practices, we can approach more dynamic and non-conceptually determined views about how, in a given ethnographic context, the dimensions of the sacred and the profane are articulated.

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