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# DE-ORIENTALIZED PEDAGOGY:

# EDUCATING NON-HINDUS ABOUT HINDUISM THROUGH KUCHIPUDI INDIAN CLASSICAL HINDU DANCE

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

SABRINA D. MISIRHIRALALL

Montclair State University

Upper Montclair, NJ

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Dissertation Chair: Dr. Tyson E. Lewis

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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation

DE-ORIENTALIZED PEDAGOGY: EDUCATING NON-HINDUS ABOUT HINDUISM WITH POSTCOLONIAL REALITIES IN MIND

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ABSTRACT

DE-ORIENTALIZED PEDAGOGY:

EDUCATING NON-HINDUS ABOUT HINDUISM THROUGH KUCHIPUDI INDIAN CLASSICAL HINDU DANCE

by Sabrina D. MisirHiralall

With postcolonial theory in mind, I engage in a self-study that shares how I use Kuchipudi Indian Classical Hindu dance to develop a de-Orientalized pedagogical process to educate non-Hindus, particularly in higher education, about Hinduism. As I teach through the medium of Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance in undergraduate classrooms, conferences, invited campus-wide lectures, and theatricals, I aim to improve my pedagogy that confronts the legacy of colonialism. Building on Edward Said's groundbreaking theory of Orientalism and postcolonial theory, this project relates a pedagogical process that will help educators across disciplines maintain an awareness of the urgency of a de-Orientalized postcolonial pedagogy that pays close attention to inter-religious and intercultural dialogue.

## Dedication

**Om Namah Shivaya Shivaya Namah Om**

*I dedicate this dissertation to the feet of Satchitanand (Supreme Being).*
*My accomplishments are only through the blessings of Satchitanand.*
*I also dedicate this dissertation to my father, Gorak Dat "Hanso" Misir.*
*Daddy, may your soul find eternal bliss with Satchitanand.*
*Thank you for your eternal blessings.*
*I love you daddy.*

DE-ORIENTALIZED PEDAGOGY

EDUCATING NON-HINDUS ABOUT HINDUISM THROUGH KUCHIPUDI INDIAN CLASSICAL HINDU DANCE

by Sabrina D. MisirHiralall

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

As I emerge from a Supreme Being as a human in this world, I consider it necessary to fulfill my life's purpose, which considers the legacy of my ancestors coupled with future generations of the world. For this reason, it is imperative for me to share a de-Orientalized pedagogy, as an educator-dancer, that helps humanity to engage in inter-religious and intercultural relations. Before I introduce the goals of this project, it is crucial for me to share a brief portion of my narrative to provide some insight on how this endeavor developed. Although some of my experiences were indeed traumatic, these experiences were central to the significance of this venture. Thus, it is vital for me to share these vulnerable experiences to shed light on the urgency of a need for humanistic considerations. This project is linked to humanistic development that is an inevitable reality for individual beings in this world.

After I briefly introduce my personal narrative, I will move on to discuss Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. I will then explain Edward Said's[1] theory of Orientalism[2] as the central concept that informs this project. To this extent, I will relate the questions for this project that develop based on Orientalism. I aim to show how I will confront Orientalism as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer. It is my hope that this introductory chapter will provide insight on how my identity causes me to realize the urgent need for humanity to think about the essentialness of inter-religious and intercultural relations with a de-Orientalized framework in mind.

*Who am I?*

If asked this question, I would answer first by saying that I am a child of a Supreme Being. For me, as I think of a Cosmic Father and a Cosmic Mother who are both *Ardhanaarishvara*[3] (One), I would say that I am a child of Shivaji,[4] the Supreme Being in Hinduism who is the Cosmic Father and Durga Devi Ma,[5] who is the Cosmic Mother. This means that everything else beyond being a cosmic human daughter is temporary for this life span. I do not aim to say that I am a celestial being but rather what I am saying is that foremost, I acknowledge that I come from a Supreme Being and hope to merge back to a Supreme Being upon death.[6] I strongly believe that my life has a meaningful purpose that is tied to my ancestry, which is why I was born into the home chosen for me by a Supreme Being.

This is *Ardhanaarishvara*, which represents the Oneness of the Cosmic Father Shiva and the Cosmic Mother Durga Devi Maa. From the One, the many emerge.

This is further representation of the above. Shivaji is my Cosmic Father and Parvati Maa, another name for Durga Devi Maa, is my Cosmic Mother.

My temporary life on this earth officially began when I was born on the twenty-sixth of June in Riverside General Hospital, which is now the Meadowlands Hospital, in Secaucus, New Jersey. Although, I cannot remember my time in my mother's womb, I do sense that it was spiritually filled. My mother and father prayed often together with my brother as a family. Perhaps this influenced my development from the time I was conceived. My parents, Choondai Misir, also known as "Sona", and Gorak Dat Misir, also known as "Hanso" were in their thirties. My elder brother, Pt. Bhisham Malcolm Misir, who is commonly known as Pt. "Jito", just turned twelve on the twentieth of June a few days before I was born.

I am a light-brown-skinned female of Indian descent with long, black hair, and black eyes. Since I was a teenager, I always weighed about a hundred pounds. As a woman of Indian descent, who is about five feet three inches tall with long black hair, I feel vulnerable to exoticism because the colonial gaze[7] looked upon Indian women as sexual creatures. The Cantonment Act of 1864[8] regulated prostitution of Indian women in colonial India. Indian women, who were assigned to serve British soldiers, became the foreign object of the male fantasy. In addition, Asian woman are often depicted as exotic in the media today. For this reason, non-Hindus might see me as exotic. I do not use the terms "Hindu" and "non-Hindu" to indicate two absolute binaries. On the contrary, I acknowledge that these terms are cultural distinctions that create a dichotomy. These terms separate humanity into two distinct categories, which I do not endorse. However, for the purposes of this project, I will use these terms to refer to the false categories that developed in the colonial era based on the desire of colonialists to civilize "Hindus" or

"non-Christians" to "Christians". Regardless of an individual's religious creed, these distinctions propagate division among humanity. With these illusionary distinctions in mind, I will use the term "Hindu" to refer to those who endorse a way of life according to the sacred religious scriptures of Hinduism such as the *Manu Smriti,*[9] the *Vedas,*[10] the *Ramayana,*[11] the *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana,*[12] and the *Srimad Devi Bhagavatam,*[13] to name a few, which are essentially ethical guides for humanity. I will use the term "non-Hindu" to refer to those who do not engage in a way of life based on the sacred religious Hindu scriptures. The religious scriptures do not label people as "Hindu" but instead, whether one identifies as "Hindu" or not, individuals who practice a "Hindu" way of life based on the religious scriptures are "Hindu".

When I was two years old, my brother and I were faced with the death of our father who passed away in our residence, which at the time was Thirteen Lord Avenue in Bayonne, New Jersey. We lived near the First Street Park where a body of water flowed. Although I have very few memories of my father, I do remember his presence. Our family always sang Hindu bhajans (songs) together with family friends. Oddly enough, I do remember my father's voice and can see him in my mind playing the harmonium (organ) and singing bhajans with my brother playing the dholak (drum). When I pray daily, I feel connected to my father's eternal soul. It is as if he blesses me on a daily basis. I am at peace when I sense this profound connection. I must thank my mother for guiding me to have this experience. My mother taught me to pray ever since I was in her womb. She is a faith-based Hindu whose devotion to the Supreme Being inspires me.

My father, mother, and brother travel from America to Guyana to host a yagna (3 day Hindu service) for their family and community. My Aja (paternal grandfather) was sickly and therefore could not read this yagna. My father asked Pt. Lionel, a paternal relative, to read this yagna in Cane Grove at my maternal grandparents' home in 1980. I was not born yet.

Around the age of two, I do remember my brother taking me to the First Street Park everyday in the afternoon, my little tiny hand in his. I could still feel the warm sun gently touch my face as if blessing my brother and me as we walked on the sidewalk. My brother would push me for what seemed like hours on the swings. My brother was my human protector growing up. Once when I was about two years old at Thirteen Lord Avenue, I accidentally fell into a swimming pool in the backyard. I remember climbing onto the wooden deck and trying to get ahold of the floating toy in the pool. That's when I fell into the cold, water-filled swimming pool. My mother screamed for my brother

since she saw me from a window. My fully clothed brother jumped into the pool with a speed to save my life. I still remember the panicked look of fear on his face, his arms around me, and the firm sound of his scolding voice. As a young child, I never played near the pool without supervision again. I was not scared of the water because my brother was always with me.

This is my brother and I during my early childhood years. The last picture on the right was taken on the day of my brother's graduation from Bayonne High School.

When my brother became a pandit[14] around the age of twenty, he learned the sacred mantras to rid our home of evil spirits. He would spiritually cleanse our home, which at the time was Seventeen West Thirty-Second Street Bayonne, New Jersey. In accordance with the Hindu tradition, we believed that some people would try to cast evil onto our family and cause harm, especially to me as a young girl. Perhaps, this is part of the reason I endured traumatic experiences. At any rate, there would seem to be an

unusual foul stench in the air that seemed to cloud the usual blissful feeling in our home. I would complain to my brother about a lurking feeling of heaviness that would feel like heavy weighted dumbbells pushing against my body but unable to even slightly enter. It was almost as if my soft childlike body was a firm shield from any evil spirits who may view me as vulnerable prey. In some cases, I would cry soundlessly, with tears pouring down my cheeks as I was tormented with severe shivers evident from the goose bumps on my body. Chills ran through my spine as if something attempted to break my faith to create a permanent intentional weakness in my twelve-year-old body. If the body becomes worn down as a child grows, then the child becomes vulnerable prey for evil spirits and for evil to develop. For this reason, my brother would feel the need to protect me to ensure that evil spirits were not present as I developed into a young woman.

Wherever my brother is, if evil follows, then he will destroy the evil and restore the goodness. My brother would perform a solo puja (Hindu worship) to pray specifically for the Supreme Being to remove evil spirits that may attempt to cause harm. I was never scared of evil, because my brother taught me that I could walk through evil with the protection of a Supreme Being all around me. He gave me the essential spiritual weapons to destroy the evil that may attempt to consume me. My brother is not just a brother, but also a father figure to me. Growing up, my brother protected me not just as a big brother ideally would, but also as I know our father would have.

My earliest memory with my mother was in daily prayer. My mother was a stay-at-home mom with me for the first twelve years of my life. Yet, I did spend a great deal of time with extended family who would baby-sit when my mother would need to run

errands. During my early years, every day my mother would always have me sit with her to pray. While most babies probably were rocked to sleep with children's lullabies, my mother sang to me in a wooden rocking chair singing Hindu bhajans. I still feel my mother's warm arms around me while she sang to me as if she would give her life to protect me using her faith in the Supreme Being as a shield. I currently sing many of the songs that my mother sang to me when I was a young child. Ironically, when my brother married my bouji (sister-in-law) when I was sixteen and they lived with my parents[15] and me for about a year, my bouji would sing Hindu chants (repetitive songs) to me in the evening before we would go to sleep. Her voice is like the sound of soft, graceful "Devi" (a female Hindu Goddess). Thus, it is quite fitting that her name as a human is "Devimatie". One of the first Hindu chants my bouji sang to me was, "Namah Shivaya Shankara Bam Bhola Baba". (Let us speak the name of Shivaji who is also known as the Cosmic Shankara who dances to the beat of the drum.) It was as if she reminded me that our family came from Ardhanaarishvara and will return to Ardhanaarishvara upon death.

My bouji and I have been hand in hand since her first year of marriage to my brother.

Growing up, wherever my family was, my home always had the sound of a Supreme Being (God). In fact, even though the family I grew up with has all branched into separate residences, each of our respective homes still has the very same sound and an even stronger presence of a Supreme Being. We all aim to attain moksha (merge back to a Supreme Being) upon our death and reunite as a family in an eternal abode of spiritual bliss. This is part of the reason why I dance Kuchipudi.[16]

I dance Kuchipudi[17] Indian classical Hindu dance because it is a part of my purpose in this world as a human. This is not something that I chose but rather is what the Supreme Being chose for me. When I hear Kuchipudi music, I hear the rhythm of the universe. The sounds are controlled sounds that move through time with the ability to penetrate my pores with the sound of the cosmos. There is a divine energy that I feel in the sounds of the song. As I dance, I wear the sacred Ghungaroos (bells) on my feet, which contribute to the interconnected sound. There is an ambiance of intention for the sounds to accompany particular moods for specific songs. For instance, the drumming and the loud cymbal-like pinging sound in the powerful *Mahishaasura Mardini Stotram*[18] depicts the divine energy of Durga Devi Maa's thundering wrath, which kills demonic entities. To some who are unfamiliar with Hinduism, this powerful energy might seem frightening. However, to me, the sounds are a melodious reminder that good will always triumph over evil as the world's clock tick-tocks. The divine energy of Durga Devi Maa will always prevail in the battle of the demons that we encounter during the world's existence.

I became what I already was – a child of a Supreme Being who aims to seek moksha through the avenue of Hindu dance. In other words, I dance Kuchipudi because I hope to attain moksha and merge back to a Supreme Being upon my death from this world. Of course, I did not realize this when my brother encouraged our mother to enroll me in a West Indian dance school when I was twelve years old. After a long discussion at the breakfast table on a Saturday morning, my brother and mother agreed that I would learn Indian classical Hindu dance. My nani (maternal grandmother) was harshly against a dance education for me, because she feared it would corrupt me. After my mother explained that I would learn strictly religious dance, then my nani felt at ease.

During the month of April at the age of twelve, my mother enrolled me for dance classes with the *Natraj Cultural Group*, currently now the *Natraj Center for the Performing Arts*.[19] I started to learn the very basic framework of Hindu dance from Didi (Sister)[20] Teshrie Kalicharan. Teshrie was a student of my life-long dance Guru, Smt. Sadhana Paranji. I use the term "Guru"[21] to honor my dance "teacher" as an individual who guides me towards a path of moksha (liberation) through providing me with a Hindu education of dance. My usage of the term "Guru" here is not to be confused with the sacred Guru Diksha[22] sanskar (sacrament) that occurs when Hindus perform a sacred ritual where their children officially begin a religious education under the guidance of a pandit (Hindu priest). My Guru Diksha Sanskar is with Pt. Maheshwar Tiwari, a respected Hindu pandit whose ancestry is tied to mine. His grandfather, Pt. Ramphair Tiwari, was the Guruji of my maternal grandmother, Bhagwatie Shankar.[23] My Guruji,

Pt. Mahesh told me to honor my dance "teacher" as my dance "Guru" because she will guide me towards moksha through Hindu dance.

At any rate, I only wished to learn strict classical Hindu dance because I felt connected to a Supreme Being as I started to learn the basics of Hindu dance. Didi Teshrie noticed that I did not want to dance contemporary Bollywood[24] dance. I did not feel this strong connection to a Supreme Being when I danced Bollywood dance. My body felt uncomfortable, even at a young age, with Bollywood dance. There is a distinction here between religious dance and cultural dance. Bollywood dance is more of a performance-based cultural dance form, whereas Hindu dance is based on the religious scriptures. Soon, Didi Teshrie told my mother to contact Smt. Sadhana Paranji who would teach me strictly Hindu dance according to the ethics of Hinduism. At the age of sixteen, after a few years of learning Bharatnatyam,[25] which is the universal dance genre of Hinduism and across regions of India, I began my life-long journey with my dance Guru, Smt. Sadhana Paranji. After many years of learning Kuchipudi, my dance Guru along with my primary spiritual Guruji, Pt. Maheshwar Tiwari, joined with family and friends to view my Rangapravesam (dance graduation; debut performance) that marked the beginning of my future as a Hindu dancer. I soon realized that there is a need to teach non-Hindus about Hinduism through Hindu dance. I will now turn to focus on why I feel there is an urgent need to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism through Hindu dance.

*Why do I teach non-Hindus?*

I teach non-Hindus in an effort to confront the long legacy of colonialism and the thriving phenomenon of Orientalism,[26] which I will elaborate on later in this introduction.

This is evident in my ancestral line. Although many Indians remained in India, masses of Indians endured a forced migration[27] to Guyana in South America after African slavery[28] ended in Guyana and there was fear of a labor shortage from Africans. At that time, present-day "Guyana" was known as "British Guiana."[29] In 1966, Guyanese people gained independence from British rule and the country became known as "Guyana."[30] For the purposes of this project, I will refer to "British Guiana" as "Guyana" because this is how I identify the country – as a current independent nation free of British rule. When my fore-parents arrived in Guyana, they were treated as cheap labor in the British colonies as they worked the plantations.[31] They were forced to endure hard labor in the cane fields and rice mills. Indians faced another form of slavery in Guyana under British rule. They were forced to either Christianize for government positions and upward social mobility or remain non-Christian in poverty as cheap labor.[32] Eventually, the laws permitted Indians to send their children to colonial schools where there was an attempt to Christianize young Indian children. [33] The goal in school was to civilize indigenous children with a basic education so that they could have the basic skill sets needed to serve in the colonies as laborers. Bacchus writes, "This education was often aimed at deculturalizing and Christianizing the East Indians who were mainly Hindus and Muslims."[34] The curricula aimed to Christianize and teach morality to the so-called uncivilized children.[35]

My mother and her siblings endured a Christianizing curriculum as young children in the nineteen fifties and sixties at the Cane Grove Anglican Primary School, which was government funded. If the students did not adhere to the rules of the school,

they would face a whipping. Before school began for the day, my mother as a Hindu girl, was forced to say the Christian prayer:

> *"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,*
> *for ever and ever. Amen."*

The teachers would also have the students say a prayer after returning from lunch. At the end of the school day, my mother was forced to recite:

> *"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the lord my soul to take. Amen."*

My nana (maternal grandfather), Ganesh Shankar,[36] and nani (maternal grandmother), Bhagwatie Shankar did not attend school. Instead, they were laborers as children who worked on the plantations. Instead, my nana remained faithful as a self-educated Hindu who was well versed in sacred Hindu scriptures and the language of Hindi as taught to him by his parents, my great-nana (great grandfather) Shankar and my great-nani (great grandmother) Sugya who were from India. When my mother and her siblings came home on the weekdays from school under British rule, they would then venture to the Cane Grove Hindi School near the Estate Mandir (temple) where they learned to read and write Hindi in the late afternoon/early evening. During the workday, my nana was a laborer in the fields but in the late afternoon/early evening, he was one of the Hindi School teachers. In addition, my nana taught all of my uncles at home to sing the sacred *Ramayana*[37] in an ancient Hindi style known as Ramayana Bani.

My maternal nana (Grandfather) Ganesh Shankar stands with my maternal nani (Grandmother) Bhagwatie Shankar at their home in Cane Grove, Guyana.

It is important for the world to know that India had a rich heritage as a civilized country with ancient traditions before the British's colonial rule. Hinduism, which developed in India, has a legitimate historical tradition, with a strong sense of morality as a part of humanity. I aim to share this through Kuchipudi Indian classical dance in an effort to correct the misconceptions of Hinduism as a pagan religion of uncivilized savages. Even though the British took Indians out of India to Guyana to work as

laborers, they could not take Hinduism out of faith-based Hindus. Although the British succeeded at using Christianity as a civilizing force to the point where some Indians came to believe that they were and still are Christians, the British could not sever the personal relationship that faith-based Hindus had with Hinduism. My mamoos (mother's brothers; uncles) continued this tradition as they taught Hindi to youths when they migrated to Jersey City, New Jersey. I remember my Mamoo Seetaram "Sonny" Ganesh, Mamoo Chateram "Parshu" Ganesh, and Mamoo Tularam "Narad" Ganesh teaching me to write Hindi when I was around seven years old at the Hindu Dharmic Sabha Mandir[38] in Jersey City. My brother ensured the completion of the task as he taught me to read and write Hindi fluently.

Essentially, my ancestors were forcibly transported from India to Guyana where they endured a lifestyle under harsh socioeconomic conditions that prevented them from the achievement of upward social mobility without compromising their faith as Hindus. My father migrated to the United States in the 1970s, along with my mother, who then sponsored their relatives to also migrate to escape the poverty they were forced into under British colonial rule. Here in this nation, my family had a dream to pursue a lifestyle as faith-based Hindus who work in a fair society – if there is such a concept. My ancestry reminds me that my personal struggle is not new, but rather is intertwined into a long legacy where my ancestors faced similar struggles. My father embraced people of different religions and cultures when he came to this country. Yet, he remained a faith-based Hindu who shared Hinduism in an effort to promote inter-religious and inter-cultural relations. Although he did not achieve his doctorate as desired, due to his

unforeseen death, he taught me that there is a need to help each other understand that we are a part of a humanitarian family who needs to think about inter-religious and inter-cultural connections despite the long legacy of colonialism that had an impact on all indigenous people.

Aside from the legacy of my ancestors, I started to realize the urgency of educating non-Hindus about Hinduism when I was a junior high student at W.F. Robinson School in Bayonne, New Jersey. I suffered a great deal of prejudicial bullying from the majority of my class because of my religion and culture, while the mass of teachers, who were almost all white, looked the other way. Most of the students would call me names like "dot-head" since Hindus often wear a dot to symbolize the third eye on their forehead. When I asked the girls in my class why they would not invite me to play with them or to their birthday parties, they rudely told me that their parents would not let them play with "dot-heads".

Not only did children bully me, but also I watched my mother be bullied by white adults. In fact, the elder white man who lived next door to us when we lived at Forty-Three East Thirty-Third Street in Bayonne would throw his cigarette buds into the backyard daily after my mother finished sweeping. One day, my mother saw him toss a coffee cup into our yard. My mother marched outside to the yard and threw the cup back over the fence. It was as if my family was viewed as trash in Bayonne. We were "out of place", as Said[39] would often say, in a town where we seemed insulted continuously for our mere existence as non-whites and non-Christians.

The students in elementary school would tease me about being Hindu and tell me that Christianity is the only "true" religion. I was not the only one who was teased in this manner. There were about three other students in the entire grade level who were not Christians. I shamefully admit that, as an elementary school student taunted by white Christians, there were times when I thought that it would be easier to fit in if I were Christian. The mere thought of this admission makes my skin feel as if needles pierce every pore of my body as a fiery sensation runs through me, because it is a thought that betrays my identity, the legacy of my ancestors, and also dishonors the theological purpose of Christianity. I feel ashamed that I let bullies enter my cognition to cause me to even momentarily question my faith as a Hindu. As Father James Chern from Montclair State University's Newman Catholic Center always tells me, those who are baptized as Christians must have the right intentions theologically. Christianity should not be used as a weapon to taunt children, endorse racism, or deny one's identity. Thankfully, my brother would always remind me that my life has a purpose as a Hindu, and I never should allow anyone to intimidate me into denying my identity. That is when I realized that there was an urgent need for inter-religious and inter-cultural education to develop an appreciation for humanity.

Also, because I was a thin young girl, my classmates would call me names like "Somalia", which I assume meant to them that I was from a poor home where there was not enough food to feed me, which was not the case at all. As a vegetarian, I had fairly healthy eating habits free of greasy foods. At the time, there was a television commercial about the poverty-stricken people in Somalia who desperately needed the nation's help.

There were disturbing pictures of the skeletons of living humans who appeared starved as they ate scraps. My classmates seemed to view me as one of those youths in the commercial. Of course, my peers did not have compassion for my life since they never asked me about whether or not I had enough food, but instead scorned anyone who did not seem to fit into their schema of what an American youth should be. The students thought I was a hideous looking Indian with long black hair and brown skin – a savage tribal girl who lacked the civilized taste of Americanism.

From the time I started walking to school on my own, I was purposefully late for school. I learned a few different routes to walk to and from school. As I would leave, I would pay attention to where the bullies would walk, and then I would devise a route plan to speed walk home. I would leave my house late to avoid the cruel bullies on the playground that seemed like parasites on the earth. In fact, I even won the "Always Late" award in the eighth grade class poll. I started going home for lunch when I was in fourth or fifth grade. I would return barely in time or a few minutes late. No one ever asked why I was late going to school. I have to wonder why my teachers did not pay more attention to what happened in the playground and also in the classroom. Instead, my teachers scolded me for always being late.

In sixth grade during the month of June, a white boy spit gum into my long black hair and the white teacher looked the other way even though I showed her the gum in my hair. One girl taunted me because she thought I had nice things. I remember during the eighth grade dance, which a friend from elementary school talked me into attending, this white girl with blonde hair and hazel eyes threatened me for my shoes that she wanted to

wear with her dress. My brother took me shopping for clothing and shoes for my eighth grade dance. Of course, I would not let my classmate have my shoes. We engaged in a confrontation of yelling at the dance and then were sent to our respective corners by our eighth grade teachers who were more concerned with breaking up the argument rather than with the principle at stake. Bullying was a horrible reality for me during my nine elementary school years, which includes kindergarten, as a student of the Bayonne School District.

Fran Wien (formerly Fran Chertoff Doyle) was the sole teacher in the Bayonne Public School District who had a great impact on my life in a manner that helped me to regain my self-worth to restore my self-image without compromising my identity as a faith-based Hindu. I first met Fran when she came to visit my eighth grade class to introduce Peer Leadership activities to develop character education. During the initial visit, I had the impression that Fran was a fair teacher who would not condone bullying on any level in her classroom. When I started Bayonne High School the following year as a freshman, I joined the Peer Leadership program, which Fran coordinated. I also worked as a student assistant in Fran's office during my lunch period. Thus, I had the opportunity to develop a mentor/mentee relationship with Fran.

Peer Leadership was an extracurricular activity that would meet once a week to build leadership skills. As a Peer Leader, I had a circle of Peer Leadership friends around me who ranged from freshmen to seniors. I also went to conferences, such as the World Aids Day Conference. Fran taught Peer Leaders first to develop a sense of self-worth and then to engage in positive communication. I acquired the skill set to be an effective

listener without imposing judgments or giving advice. In addition, I developed decision making skills as an individual and when in a group. Soon, I became one of the Peer facilitators that led breakout sessions during the large group meeting, which had about seventy-five attendees when I was a student. I also learned to engage in Peer Mediation to employ conflict resolution skills to positively solve problems.

Fran taught in a manner that valued the dignity of human life regardless of an individual's race, creed, religion, or physical as well as mental handicaps. Yet, because of the politics of the school district, Fran was moved to an elementary school while I was still in high school. However, my Peer Leadership friends and I still tried to keep the legacy of Peer Leadership thriving despite the lack of experience or the philosophy of education of our newly assigned coordinators. Fran eventually was moved back to Bayonne High School as a vice principal and then became principal of Henry E. Harris School. This occurred during the same year that I began teaching elementary school at the very same year that I graduated college. I felt as if I was in a safe nest at Henry E. Harris School because my mentor, whom I had kept in touch with throughout college, and I were going to continue to work together with a philosophy of education that placed a great value on the moral dignity of human life.

When I was a rookie teacher, Fran helped me to deal with racism on an adult level. Several of the students' parents tried to bully me. A class parent, who was a white male, once said to me when he cornered me in the stairwell in the hallway after school when he disagreed with the way I handled a situation with his daughter, "In India, maybe you do things like that, but in America, we do things like this." As a first-year teacher, I

did not know how to respond to that assumption-filled comment. I remember that I felt frightened, as if this man, who used an angry, hostile tone to the point where his face was apple red, thought that I was some sort of wild animal who needed to be tamed. A worrisome chill ran through my body from head to toe as my throat felt so tight that air could not pass through it. The man stormed out of the school eventually as I absorbed what had occurred.

I remember a particular incident that occurred in Fran's office when we met one morning with a student's mother and father, who were white. During the school year, I met with the student's mother to discuss the student's academic progress. The student had difficulty with reading comprehension. I informed the parents that I would spend as much time as possible with the student to help her to build her reading skills. The student did not appreciate this assistance from me. My class would tell me about the horrible words this young girl would say while in special classes, such as Music, Physical Education, Art, etc. Overall, my class was very protective of me as a teacher and I was protective of them. It was as if we had a reciprocal community of care.

Nevertheless, the parents of this young girl asked to meet with the principal and me. During the meeting, the parents screamed at me, threw harsh insults at me, and did not care to discuss their daughter's academic progress. Instead, they wanted to discipline me as a rookie teacher. Fran spoke to them as she said that the goal is to discuss their daughter's academic progress, which we could do, if they wished to act professionally. However, if they are going to yell in the school setting, then we cannot engage in a discussion. Therefore, they needed to leave the premises.

When they left the room, I looked at Fran without words to accompany my thoughts. I could not believe the crassness of what just occurred in a professional setting. As a first year teacher, I loved all of my students and would never intentionally cause any of my students to despise me. Moreover, I could not come to terms with the verbal viciousness of the parents. I was never around such harsh verbal encounters among adults, as a young child, or as a young woman. Fran told me that she taught the student's father when he was in second grade in Bayonne. There was a handicapped girl on crutches in the class. My student's father threw the crutches across the room one day and said, "Crawl and get it you crippled girl." Fran told me that hatred is an evil cycle that sometimes runs as a parasite in families who cannot break through into a good path in life. My student's father was a vicious bully, and so my student was also becoming a bully.

At any rate, as I left Fran's office, I walked through the Multipurpose Room on my way to the second grade outdoor line-up spot. As soon as I opened the doors of the Multipurpose Room, I felt extremely lightheaded and dizzy. It was as if the shock and harshness of the verbal attack caused my body to shut down. All of a sudden, I fell to the ground as I went in and out of consciousness. All I remember was Ms. O'Lear, the first grade teacher, holding me in her arms as she called my name, which I could hear only vaguely. I had hit my head on the floor when I fell to the ground so was sent home for a week to recuperate from the ordeal. Around that time, I had intensive Kuchipudi dance rehearsals three times a week in Fresh Meadows, New York and was arriving home at around midnight and waking up to teach the next day. My Rangrapravesam (dance

recital) was about two weeks away in the month of May after that ordeal. Thus, I had to regain my bodily strength to fulfill my purpose as a dancer.

When I returned to Henry E. Harris, my class had many Get Well Soon cards for me. I remember several of my students came in early that morning since they knew I was returning to class. They rushed over to me at my desk in my classroom as they with concern asked if I was okay. I could see the genuine care in their young eyes as we talked. Overall, my students and I did have a community of care that I am very grateful for as an educator. Nevertheless, in the following year, another parent, who was a white female, stood in front of my class one morning and threatened to "break every bone in my body" because she claimed I did not take good care of her daughter in school. Fran acquired a restraining order against this woman who also physically threatened Fran. She insulted Fran for being Jewish and "not belonging" at the school. I had all three of the individual's children during different years when I taught second grade. On the last day that I taught at Henry E. Harris before I resigned, which was soon after Fran retired as principal, this particular class parent wrote me a two page apology letter, which I do believe was sincere, but perhaps that is gullible of me.

When I taught second grade at Henry E. Harris School in Bayonne, a boy from my own elementary school years came to serve as a substitute for my class while I had to go to a professional development workshop. I was reluctant to leave my innocent students with him knowing how much he taunted me when we were in school together. Although he attempted to apologize to me during our eighth grade graduation night and did not taunt me when we attended Bayonne High School, I still could not forget the

scars he and his friends left on me. After briefly relating this concern to him, I went to my workshop and then invited him to have lunch with me in my classroom. During lunch, I told him how being bullied affected me. I explained to him the real, non-fictionalized poverty in Guyana along with the legacy of my Indian ancestors. He was very remorseful about how he had treated me in school. Yet, although he was ashamed, he could not stand up to his friends, who he was still friends with at that point in time, and tell them that bullying is a moral crime. He also told me that the boy who spit gum into my hair was diagnosed with cancer. At the time, I felt regretful that I could not muster up remorse for that boy who had humiliated me. I forgave the young man when we had lunch that day. I also pray that his soul finds peace and the Supreme Being helps him to develop his goodness and destroy the evil within him. However, when I looked at the profile pictures through the social media network of other classmates who bullied me, I still sense an evil look in their eyes that will not seem to go away. Perhaps that is why my remorseful classmate did not speak to his friends and ask them to apologize to me. I fear that they are in an endless, vicious cycle that will progress unless (a.) the government enforces laws that view bullying as a legal crime punishable by law and (b.) their children see the immorality with bullying and decide to end the cycle.

As I mentioned earlier though, my brother taught me to walk through evil with the Supreme Being all around me. Thus, the scars of the bullies hit the spiritual shield of my body as I remain protected through a Supreme Being. Several of my elementary notebooks have Hindu mantras written all over the pages as I would never let the wickedness of cruel bullies destroy my faith as a Hindu. It is important for me to help

non-Hindus acquire an appreciation for Hinduism in an attempt to prevent bullying and racism, which might provoke Hindu children to conform to the blasphemy of Hinduism and Indian culture.

While many young girls dyed their hair and bleached their skin to conform to what they thought were American standards of beauty, I had no desire to do so. My home life was infused with Hinduism and Indian culture. I had no desire to imitate what my classmates or class parents in Bayonne wanted me to be. I felt a sense of sorrow for the ignorance of my classmates and selected class parents who did not seem to want to know me as a Hindu. I wish I had the opportunity to share my religion and culture with them in an effort to help them overcome their issues of supremacy.

Although I still endure a great deal of racism, I am proud to be a faith-based Hindu who is a descendant of India. I will sing my bhajans (songs), say my slokas (prayers), and wear my traditional clothing, regardless of where I go. The colonialists could not and still cannot take Hinduism out of the blood of faith-based Hindus like myself. While this might seem like an aggressive stance, I am not furious with the British. They felt the need to colonize Indians to help foster a more "civilized" society. This is not an excuse for the era of indentured servitude and Christianizing in the Caribbean, but rather is a plea for an understanding that could help humanity to move forward. As many believe the great Mahatma Gandhi said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."[40] Throughout the years, I came to realize that some people have a desire to learn about Hinduism and Indian culture but do not have access to the information to help them gain this education. While I probably cannot confront the

ignorance of supremacists who may not even read this text, I can make my scholarly voice heard to help individuals gain a framework of the ancient traditions of Hinduism and Indian culture through Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. I beg the pardon of those of British descent who might feel attacked through this text. My goal is not to attack British descendants but rather to shed light on Hinduism and Indian culture in an effort to develop an understanding that will end the need to Christianize and colonize Indians and all people of indigenous descent as I hope to foster inter-religious and inter-cultural relations.

Overall, I had a serious life-altering choice to make. One choice was to remain passive, as many Indians did, and conform to the expectations of the British who aimed to use Christianity to civilize Indians to become what the British wanted them to be. My grandparents did not make the choice to passively lose their Hindu religion and traditional Indian culture. They struggled to maintain their traditions while forced to serve the British. I was not taught to be a passive girl without a voice. With the struggles of my ancestors and my ancient roots in mind, I chose to continue the religious and cultural legacy of my ancient ancestors as a faith-based Hindu woman. However, I had to overcome many obstacles to fulfill my purpose as a Hindu dancer. The bullies were not the only individuals who left deep, traumatic emotional scars on my body. Since my body is my pedagogical tool that I use to engage in Hindu dance, I consider it necessary to disclose some additional disturbing obstacles that I had to confront before I could fulfill my purpose as a Hindu dancer.

*My Body*

It is imperative to acknowledge the struggles I endured from a personal dimension to understand why I view this project as urgent. Aside from my bullying experiences in elementary school, as a young girl, I endured a great deal of personal bodily trauma, on several levels, which I will not elaborate on here, but most certainly contributed to my sense of self worth and body image. Briefly, there were particular men and teenage boys[41] who considered themselves entitled to my body. While there were many scattered incidents, there were also specific, recurring incidents from the time I was about seven years old to when I was about twelve years old. I will not elaborate on my childhood trauma, but I will say that I used the psychological defense mechanism of "blocking" to deal with a severe re-occurring encounter. This experience coupled with the simultaneous bullying that I endured during my elementary years caused me to feel very uncomfortable in my body to the point where I just wanted my soul to leave my body. I had to learn to overcome this discomfort before I could use my body as a pedagogical tool to engage in Hindu dance. I do not mean to say that Hindu dance is a therapeutic tool used to deal with trauma. While Hindu dance might be therapeutic, it is first a sacred art form used to fulfill a deep sense of purpose. These harmful encounters continued throughout my life, except now I am an assertive woman capable of dealing immediately with any potential situations due to the guidance of my brother and bouji (sister-in-law) who taught me to make my voice heard right away.

Growing up, I was always taught to honor elder humans with respect as I would my parents. Treat humans in my age bracket as my own siblings. Care for younger

humans as a parent would. This is not the moral value of all humans though. Those who treat me with disrespect and do not honor me as a human may be a part of a kusang (un-truthful company) that I do not wish to become a part of. Yet, we all are a part of humanity, which makes it imperative to help one another develop goodness and rid the world of evil.

I spent time with my brother and bouji who always stayed in satsangh (truthful company) even if walking down the street. When they married each other, when I was a young teenager, it is as if their two souls became one soul in two bodies. From the time that they married, if they sensed that the company they were in was not holy, then they would immediately remove themselves from that setting. I trusted my brother, bouji, and the people they associated with. Thus, I knew that they would continue to teach me to distinguish between satsangh (truthful company) and kusang (un-truthful company) along with giving me an education of sacred mantras that would forever protect me and spiritually cleanse me from the scars of evil. My brother taught me not to fear evil because as long as I remember that I am a child of a Supreme Being, the Supreme Being will always protect me, although this may not be clear to me.

While I was the "tribal, savage girl" during my elementary school years to mostly white children and teachers, I was the exotic, beautifully-sexually-figured girl to Indians who did not see Hindu ideals. This was a living paradox for me, which I found difficult to live with. However, I had to learn to gain control over "automatic reactions", which according to Wendy Maltz[42] are feelings, thoughts, and sensations that imitate the past and prevent a healthy mindset. Emotionally, I felt fearful of predators who terrorized me

and made feel shamefully disgusted to be in my body, which created an emotional numbness of sadness that confused me. Physically, I felt as if needles pinched every pore of my body as a heightened heat penetrated my skin while it simultaneously crushed my entire body in a manner that caused an intense sense of nauseating pain that seemed to make my soul lost in my body. This would cause intrusive thoughts that would develop into violent nightmares about harm to my body. Sometimes, the nightmares would blend with all sorts of flashbacks, causing my body to relive my past experiences. During a period when I had re-occurring nightmares, my brother bought me a stereo for me to keep in my bedroom. In the night, he would have me listen to bhajans (Hindu religious songs) as I would fall asleep. This helped me learn to sleep in the night without fear of any "automatic reactions". Yet, sometimes these reactions would still arise in my sleep.

I paid close attention to Wendy Maltz as I learned to identify and defuse the triggers of my automatic reactions. Maltz's four-step process is:

> "1. STOP and become aware. 2. CALM yourself. 3. AFFIRM your present reality. 4. Choose a new response."[43]

This might seem like a simple process, but for me it took years to follow. I had to learn the underlying method of each step as a part of my healing journey. Eventually, I learned that Hindu dance, a part of my purpose in the world, is my response to defuse the triggers of automatic reactions. As a Hindu dancer, I am aware that I am the child of a Supreme Being, which creates a sense of calmness in my soul as I remember that this reality that I live in is temporary. My eternal reality is with the Supreme Being. Therefore, I choose a new response that maintains a peaceful, healthy frame of mind to ensure that I

successfully fulfill my life's purpose, which will lead me back to a Supreme Being upon my death.

Although my body is scarred with the marks of bullies and sexual predators, I am an empowered woman who confronts my own personal history as I dance. Sometimes, I feel as if my inner soul is pushing against the walls of my body screaming to escape from a human existence in the world. I immediately remember that, as my brother always told me, I was sent to earth from a Supreme Being to fulfill a particular purpose in life. Before I die, I must fulfill my purpose for the duration of my life, which will end when the Supreme Being feels that I completed my life's tasks. I will not let my fear of exoticism prevent me from engaging in Hindu dance because it is a part of my life's purpose. When I dance, I feel that the wounds heal as I connect to a Supreme Being who bestows blessings to me that rid the blemishes on my body. I become a stronger, empowered, assertive woman with each Hindu dance that gives my body the spiritual weapons to battle any exoticism that may arise before, during, and after the dance. In other words, the gaze from a Supreme Being overpowers any exoticism that I may endure. In addition to my personal sensory experiences, I feel obligated to teach non-Hindus about Hinduism through dance because it is imperative to understand the urgency of inter-religious relations to develop an appreciation for humanity.

*About Kuchipudi*

Before continuing to discuss Kuchipudi dance as an educational issue, I will briefly explain Kuchipudi dance. Kuchipudi dance adheres to the cosmic law of Hindu dharma, which means that dancers aim to perform virtuous, dutiful actions before, during,

and after the dance. In essence, for Kuchipudi dancers, virtue involves the observance of religion, as a way of life that leads to unity with a Supreme Being. According to Rao[44], "Kuchi" refers to Manmadha, the God of love, and "pudi" refers to hero-heroine relationships and also means "village".[45] The dance drama should encourage viewers, regardless of their religious identity, to think about ethics. In other words, the dancer through the dance drama attempts to show the viewers of the performance that virtuous people should act with good intentions as divine beings as opposed to unvirtuous people who act as demonic beings.

There is also a geographical history to the development of Kuchipudi dance.

> "The classical dance as practised in Andhra Pradesh, a State on the mid-eastern coast of India is known as Kuchipudi, and it gets its name from the village of the same name, near Masulipatam in the Krishna district. Springing from the comprehensive principles, system and techniques of the classical dance as expounded in the *Natya Sastra* by Bharata Muni, this highly developed form of the classical dance has come down to posterity in the purposeful dance drama form. Through these dance dramas, the full beauty of lyric, music and dance composition are unfolded to tell a story pregnant with emotional expression and high ethical intent."[46]

Kuchipudi dance originally developed in a village named "Kuchipudi" which is located in the Krishna District of Andra Pradesh in the southern mid-eastern part of India. The dance style adheres to the system of Hindu dance as related in the ancient Hindu scripture, the *Natya Sastra*.[47] The text explains the ethic of Hindu dance. Although Kuchipudi dance originated in the village of Kuchipudi, it soon spread beyond the boundaries of Andhra Pradesh with the purpose of thinking about ethics. [48]

As a Kuchipudi dancer, I dance with the intention to teach about the ethics of Hinduism in a manner that does not force a Hindu epistemological framework onto

others, but rather in attempt to share what the ethics of a Hindu epistemological framework are. Despite my purpose as a Kuchipudi dancer, I experience a problem when I use dance as a pedagogical tool to educate non-Hindus. As I mentioned earlier, by non-Hindus I refer to individuals who do not believe in or are unfamiliar with a way of life based on Hindu religious scriptures regardless of geographical location. Also, keep in mind that this project is limited to the northeastern part of the United States of America. My problem involves my ability to relate the educational nature of the dance. In some instances, the viewers of the dance do not understand the sacredness of the Kuchipudi dances, which strips the dance of its religious historicity and infuses solely cultural assumptions.

For example, I danced in a concert at New Jersey City University sponsored by the Department of Music, Dance, and Theatre in the Margaret Williams Theatre when I was an undergraduate student. I wore the sacred costume with traditional dance temple jewelry. I faced great discomfort with dancers dancing in undergarments right before my dance that honored the Supreme Being in the form of Shivaji. Most of the people backstage told me they enjoyed the "Indian" traditional dance but did not seem to associate the dance with Hinduism. In fact, the program for the event said "Classical Indian Dance (traditional folk dance)".[49] Right after my dance, there was a West African dance, which seemed to mean to me that I was associated with "cultural" dance and not "religious" dance.[50] At any rate, I did not have the opportunity to present the viewers of the dance with any prior knowledge to support the dance. This made me feel scarred as a sacred dancer because I felt out of place in a hybrid space where I was neither Eastern

nor Western but yet Eastern and Western. I experienced discomfort as I could not seem to come to terms with what was expected of me and what my purpose was as a Kuchipudi dancer. I realized that if I dance in an academic setting for non-Hindus, then I must present some background to build the prior knowledge of the viewers to restore the sacredness of the dance and my intentions as a Kuchipudi dancer. For this reason, Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance presents an educational issue for me as an educator who aims to promote interreligious dialogue that does not misrepresent religious traditions.

For me to successfully dance, I need to use dance as an educational tool that overcomes Orientalism and acknowledges a postcolonial reality whether as an educator on stage or in the classroom. Essentially, I desire to show how Kuchipudi dance could serve as an educational tool in the West. I do not seek to train higher education educators to become dancers. Rather, I seek to show higher education educators how Kuchipudi dance is a pedagogical tool that the dancer and the non-dancer can use to overcome the Orientalism of the religion of Hinduism and Indian culture in a manner that acknowledges the realities of postcolonialism.

As a Kuchipudi dancer and educator, I currently use Kuchipudi dance as a de-Orientalized pedagogical tool and form of contemplative education in Religious Studies classes in higher education. My dissertation project will explore my phenomenological experience as a Kuchipudi dancer and educator who uses Kuchipudi dance as a de-Orientalized pedagogical tool that moves beyond the nature of a mere fine art. I engage successfully in Kuchipudi dance if I sense that my personal, phenomenological

experience indicates that I serve as a receptor of an educational gaze that sees the dance as a divine art form. Here, an educational gaze is a curious look that intends to learn about the educational nature of the dance. As an educator, I hope that I will perceive an educational gaze, which I will elaborate on in an upcoming chapter, when I use Kuchipudi dance pedagogically. The dance has an educational purpose that moves beyond physical acrobatic activity. If I do not sense an educational gaze, then I feel I have engaged in a failed attempt to dance. Currently, I feel that I sometimes fail to successfully use Kuchipudi dance pedagogically to educate non-Hindus because my personal, phenomenological experience, in these cases, indicates a lack of an educational gaze. When I dance for non-Hindus, my phenomenological experience causes me to sometimes deal with the problem of exoticism. I sense this when there is an aura around me that pierces my skin like arrows crushing my body in an attempt to mold me into something that is familiar to the spectators. In the eyes of the viewers, I sense that I become what they want me to be, which in the abovementioned dance concert at New Jersey City University seemed to be a cultural entertainer, which is not what I identify as.

Essentially, the problem of exoticism means that I feel scarred as I phenomenologically receive a gaze that views me as a foreign exotic creature that is alluring and appealing. The problem of exoticism is not just a postcolonial problem but also a feminist issue. In the abovementioned dance concert at New Jersey City University, the coordinators placed me right before a West African dance piece, which made me feel that my dance was solely a form of culture.

*Orientalism*

Overall, my problem from the dissertation arises from my dance experiences and the historical era of imperialism. *Colonization* occurs when those in power believe there is a need to dominate in a manner that subjugates people.[51] Colonizers created colonies as they moved into territory because they felt there was a need to "civilize" the so-called savages of the land. *Postcolonialism* is an intellectual discourse that confronts the legacy of colonialism and attempt to de-colonize. With the legacy of colonialism and a postcolonial lens in mind, how do I, as a Kuchipudi dancer, use Hindu dance to educate non-Hindus about the Eastern literature of Hinduism? For non-Hindus, I feel the power of the exoticizing gaze when I dance, which might very well block the educational intention of the dance. This exoticizing gaze prevents the understanding of the traditional nature of the dance and the introduction to Hinduism as a world religion. Perhaps others who aim to use the arts as an educational tool face similar problems. My problem is moving the exotic gaze of non-Hindus to an educational gaze that seeks to learn about the ethics of Hinduism in a manner that takes into consideration the multiple perspectives of the complex society we live in today.

I will focus on the problem of Orientalism that occurs when using Kuchipudi dance as an educational tool for non-Hindus. Edward Said discusses the epistemological concepts of who has access to knowledge and how knowledge develops in the West and the East in his book *Orientalism.*[52]

> "The Orientalist stage, as I have been calling it, becomes a system of moral and epistemological rigor. As a discipline representing institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism thus comes to exert a three-way force on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western 'consumer' of Orientalism. It

> would be wrong, I think, to underestimate the strength of the three-way relationship thus established. For the Orient ('out there' towards the East) is corrected, even penalized for lying outside the boundaries of European society, 'our' world; the Orient is thus *Orientalized*, a process that not only marks the Orient as the province of the Orientalist but also forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codifications (like d'Herbelot's alphabeticized *Bibliotheque*) as the *true* Orient. Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgment, not the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist."[53]

Said acknowledges that there is a Western sphere and an Eastern sphere. Said specifically, in the above quote, discusses how the West develops its own knowledge of the East. In a sense, the East becomes an objectified subject matter where the West judges the East based on Western ideals of what the East should be. This is what I experienced as an elementary school student when I was bullied. New Orientalist knowledge of the East develops into an accepted Western form of knowledge, which is then used to teach other Westerners about the East as the West perceives it. I remember my classmates telling me that their parents would not let them play with "dot-heads". This is my lived experience of Orientalism that presents a problem for the West and the East. The East sometimes misrepresents the West, just as the West, in many cases, misrepresents the East. My project focuses on the way the West misrepresents the East. As stated earlier, during *colonialism*, nations were once ruled and forced to adhere to certain enforced religious and cultural traditions. *Postcolonialism* is a subject area that focuses on the theories of religion and culture after the era of colonialism.

Before continuing, it is crucial to pay attention to the way Said defines the West and the East. Said writes,

> "To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in

> such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trader, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental 'experts' and 'hands', an Oriental professorate, a complex array of 'Oriental' ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use – the list can be extended more or less indefinitely. My point is that Orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the Bible lands."[54]

Said refers to the East as the "Orient" and the West as the "Occident". By East, he means Asia and by the West, he refers to Britain and France. However, he does not mean this in a geographical sense. Essentially, Said acknowledges the West as the Western attitudes associated with Britain and France and the East as Eastern attitudes connected with Asia. This is what my ancestors experienced during the diaspora when they were labeled as "Indians" and "Hindus" instead of "humans". My ancestors in Guyana were forced to either develop Western attitudes as associated with Britain and France or remain labeled as uncivilized savages who were cheap labor.

Even though Said is of Eastern descent, he does not advocate for either Western or Eastern discourse, but rather suggests that we learn to accept that our histories intertwine.

> "My principal aim is not to separate but to connect, and I am interested in this for the main philosophical and methodological reason that cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure, and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality."[55]

Thus, we cannot live separately from each other, regardless of whether we are part of the Western or Eastern sphere, because we already live together as a part of each other's world. While there are unique characteristics to each of our cultures, our cultures are

interconnected. Therefore, there are some commonalities that we need to acknowledge. In the below quote, Said discusses the nature of scholarly work.

> "Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf. None of this takes place in the abstract, however. Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies."[56]

Said indicates that first there is a need to understand both traditions from within as opposed to a perspective that is imposed on the other from the outside. Specifically, writers need to be aware of the text that they produce about the East. The goal should be to represent and not misrepresent the East. Therefore, not only writers, but also scholars need to situate themselves within the East as the East *is*. Once they understand the perspectives of the other, they should think about how to infuse these traditions in a pragmatic way that will benefit the global public sphere today. For the dissertation, it is my hope that I will confront the problem of the exoticizing gaze that prevents non-Hindus from understanding the nature of Kuchipudi dance. Once non-Hindus overcome the problem of the exotic gaze, then I will aim to move non-Hindus to an educational gaze that infuses Kuchipudi dance appropriately into the current global culture.

> "Cultural experience or indeed cultural form is radically, quintessentially hybrid, and if it has been the practice in the West since Immanuel Kant to isolate cultural and aesthetic realms from the worldly domain, it is now time to rejoin them."[57]

I share Said's goal that recognizes that the interconnectedness between the West and the East cannot be avoided, and thus must be approached pragmatically, with cultural sensitivity, and understanding. Cultures are not just separate and distinct from one

another. On the contrary, cultures are joined together by commonalties. My goal for the dissertation is to overcome this problem of the isolation of religions and cultures by using Kuchipudi dance as an educational tool to educate non-Hindus. My own phenomenological experience will provoke the commonality of the educational gaze as I hope to serve as a representative of the postcolonial tradition of education.

*Questions for this project*

This raises a series of questions about Kuchipudi dance education. The questions overlap and intertwine with one another. Said would concur that this cannot be avoided since our histories are entangled in the web of this world. I start with questions that pertain to the Kuchipudi dance tradition itself and the experiences of the East and the West. Then, I move to questions about Kuchipudi dancers and dance educators. It will be a difficult task to examine the dance tradition without an examination of the history of dancers and dance educators and vice versa. Thus, while I realize this, I propose to link these questions together in an intertwined manner that acknowledges the individualities of dancers and dance educators while also acknowledging the commonalities of dancers and dance educators as a part of Indian dance culture.

The main question for this discourse is how can Kuchipudi dance promote an educational gaze that is a critical, self-reflexive position that intends to overcome the exotic gaze and also rise above the isolation of religions and cultures? This leads to another vital question. How can I, as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, change the Western fundamental assumptions about the East that causes Orientalism to thrive? Consequently, how can the vibrant Kuchipudi dance culture live on today and not in the

past, in a postcolonial space while retaining the traditions of the past? These questions deal with the problems of exoticism that emerge from my scholarly work based on my personal experiences as a Westerner of Eastern descent who practices an Eastern dance style.

Even though culture[58] is unstable and constantly changing, how can Kuchipudi dancers as well as dance teachers maintain a fidelity to the traditions of Indian classical dance without employing a belief in culture as pure and untainted? How can Kuchipudi dancers and dance educators be representative of the Kuchipudi dance tradition as a part of Hinduism in the West and the East as opposed to corrupters or people who misrepresent the dance tradition? I use the word corrupters because it is my contention that while some dancers may cause the dance tradition to transform, others may corrupt the dance tradition through Orientalizing the dance tradition based on the way the West constructs knowledge of the East. Those who present Kuchipudi dance pedagogy in this manner misrepresent the tradition. I seek to pragmatically transform the tradition according to the new goals that arise because of educational and political needs.

While the dance literature and education literature may adequately address the needs of mainstream issues in education, postcolonial issues in education also need to be sufficiently addressed. There are current gaps in the dance literature and the education literature because these bodies of literature do not adequately address the emerging issues of postcolonial realities for female Kuchipudi dancers, like myself, who exist between a Hindu tradition and a Western non-Hindu secular culture. For instance, the *Natya Shastra*,[59] the ancient Hindu book about dance theory by the Sage Bharatamuni, was

written during Tretayuga,[60] which is the second age of the world according to Hinduism. This text deals with the mannerisms of the Hindu dancer. The author discusses how the dancer engages as a dancer before, during, and after the dance.

Likewise, the *Abhinaya Darapanam*,[61] the ancient Hindu text about the form of dance by the Sage Nandikeshwara, was also written around that time. This text discusses the gestures the dancer uses during the dance. The author writes about hand gestures, feet gestures, head gestures, neck gestures, and eye gestures as the form that the dancer uses to speak the language of dance. The ancient texts had a different problem, which was to provide dancers with the dance education needed to dance. The authors did not need to consider the problems of exoticism that emerge from colonialism because these problems did not exist back then. Even though the problem of exoticism exists today, most of the current Kuchipudi dance literature[62] is written for an Eastern, Hindu population and still discusses dance theory and dance form as opposed to the issue of exoticism that inevitably occurs among non-Hindus. Furthermore, the Kuchipudi dance literature is very scarce and typically mostly found solely in the East through Indian publishers. The literature is very limited and rare in the West. I will build on the Kuchipudi dance literature for readers of the East and the West as I confront the problem of exoticism and the need to move from an exotic gaze to an educational gaze. Because the Kuchipudi dance literature is largely restricted to an Eastern population, which authors assume are already familiar with Hindu beliefs, a postcolonial theory of Kuchipudi dance is needed to introduce the West to Kuchipudi dance and also deal with the assumptions of non-Hindus.

In sum, my phenomenological experience during the dance performance has a direct effect on my ability to relate the dance. Thus, it is imperative for me to deal with my perception of the exotic gaze that occurs through Orientalism. This exotic gaze has the ability to stimulate all sorts of terror from my past that may block my ability to engage in Hindu dance. The root of my problem is based on the residual effects of colonialism that misrepresent the tradition of Kuchipudi dance. I seek to develop a philosophical postcolonial educational theory using the education literature to deal with this problem. This will help dance educators within the Eastern and Western tradition understand the theory of Kuchipudi dance. Furthermore, this will help me use dance appropriately among non-Hindus and specifically in academia where my goal is to introduce students to the Eastern literature of Hinduism and Indian culture.

*Confronting Orientalism*

Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance inside and outside of Hinduism presents an urgent educational issue. This issue concerns the educational value of Kuchipudi dance in both the Eastern and Western traditions. For this reason, as a Hindu dancer and educator within and outside of Hinduism, I need to engage in a theoretical development of a postcolonial pedagogy that deals with the power issues that are missed in the existing dance literature and the contemplative literature.

Postcolonial scholars[63] show that we live in a postcolonial, multicultural world that is full of misrepresentations of cultural *Others*. Specifically, Edward Said states,

> "There were two principal methods by which Orientalism delivered the Orient to the West in the early twentieth century. One was by means of the disseminative capacities of modern learning, its diffusive apparatus in the learned professions, the universities, the professional societies, the explorational and geographical

> organizations, the publishing industry. All these, as we have seen, built upon the prestigious authority of the pioneering scholars, travelers, and poets whose cumulative vision had shaped a quintessential Orient; the doctrinal – or doxological – manifestation of such an Orient is what I have been calling here latent Orientalism…The second method by which Orientalism delivered the Orient to the West was the result of an important convergence. For decades the Orientalist had spoken about the Orient, they had translated texts, they had explained civilizations, religions, dynasties, cultures, mentalities – as academic objects, screened off from Europe by virtue of their inimitable foreignness."[64]

Said relates how Orientalism currently thrives in a diasporic society. As Said stated, education, through a variety of avenues such as the publishing field, classes within universities, and professional organizations, promoted Orientalism based on the esteemed authority of noteworthy scholars. These scholars developed knowledge of the Orient based on their interpretation as mere uninformed and culturally insensitive observers who relate the nature of foreign cultures as the cultural *Other*. Scholars who misrepresent the Orient pave the way for other scholars to cite incorrect prestigious scholars. This causes Orientalism to remain a thriving reality even within a postcolonial age.

Not only is a postcolonial reality present in education, but it is also a factor in the social and political forum in postcolonial studies. From a social and political perspective, Ashis Nandy relates the historical growth of colonialism in India in his book *The Intimate Enemy*.[65] Specifically, he discusses how Britain used its masculinity to enforce Western ideals and Western forms of education onto the femininized nation of India. Because of this colonization, Nandy states that peace leader, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) used his knowledge of Western law to fight for the independence of the Eastern nation, India. Gandhi[66], who lived in the East and the West, had a desire to overcome the misunderstandings and misrepresentations that the West had of the East and vice versa.

For Gandhi, one culture is not superior to the other but rather all cultures need to learn to live harmoniously in this postcolonial era. Gandhi essentially helped to initiate a postcolonial period that developed an awareness of colonizing, Orientalist ideologies.

While the official era of colonization by nation states has largely ended, traces of colonizing, Orientalist ideologies remain in this postcolonial period initiated by Gandhi and others. Comparative educators acknowledge these traces. Crossley and Tikley write,

> "After all, at the most basic and obvious level the vast majority of the education systems that we study as comparativists have their origins in the colonial era. In this respect, it is hard to conceive of comparative education existing as a field in anything resembling its current form if colonial education had not been so successful in spreading a particular (western) form of education along with the accompanying disciplinary framework that, whether we like it or not, forms the epistemological basis of much comparative thinking. Indeed, colonial education has also facilitated the use of English and other 'global' (read European) languages as the medium though which discourses in comparative education are most often conducted. Furthermore, many existing education systems still bear the hallmarks of the colonial encounter in that they remain elitist, lack relevance to local realities and are often at variance with indigenous knowledge systems, values and beliefs."[67]

According to Crossley and Tikly,[68] postcolonial education studies exist because of colonialism. While most education systems aim to de-colonize, Crossley and Tikly indicate that there are still many education systems across the globe that have elements of colonization. This includes the imposition of the elitist and the contradictory knowledge bases that force students to develop epistemological beliefs that contradict their local communities and/or global community. Altbach and Kelly[69] urge educators to develop postcolonial perspectives because this view provides an opportunity for teachers to develop appropriate pedagogical abilities to teach students in a postcolonial era. Also, a

postcolonial perspective helps educators learn how to deal with education systems that still function under colonialist ideologies.

Educators need to pay attention to these issues, with a postcolonial perspective in mind, because the dissemination of Orientalized knowledge represents the East inaccurately as the cultural *Other*. The view of cultures as the *Other* causes scholars to see the foreignness of the diversity of cultures rather than the commonalities. Boyd[70] writes about this *dilemma of diversity.* The dilemma emerges based on two contradictory beliefs. First, there is a need for a common thread that helps society function morally. Second, because of the multitude of cultures across the globe, there are different perspectives on what it means to live morally in society. Boyd's *dilemma of diversity* leads to tension of moral pluralism. Moral pluralism[71] occurs when moral principles are incompatible and lead to differences in areas such as educational policy.

The *dilemma of diversity* leads to another crucial issue for educators on all levels, whether within public or private schools or inside or outside of academia. Currently, we engage in mere tolerance in schools. Students need to learn about the underlying values within each culture as opposed to simply being told to tolerate other cultures. Some values are not tolerable. Hate crimes, for example, are intolerable.

> "It is rarely noticed that the subsequent ethical relativism that is logically entailed by this move effectively undercuts the meaning of any commitment to cultural pluralism as somehow aiming at cross-cultural respect and cooperation. When it *is* noticed, a thin, 'wishy-washy' plank of liberal tolerance is positioned over the abyss of relativism, which is somehow thought to be enough to patch over differences and allow everyone to live harmoniously ever after: entrusting oneself to a dogmatic stance on tolerance is thought to avoid the whole problem."[72]

It is important to be aware of ethical relativism that promotes a dogmatic approach to tolerance. As Boyd indicates, liberal tolerance is not the answer to the messy ethical issues of society. Society should have a certain ethical standard that should not be compromised by tolerating behavior that compromises its ethical nature. Similarly, Covaleskie[73] describes a need for intolerance when it compromises personal principles. This is where intolerance is valid since we cannot remain value neutral. Heslep[74] states,

> "In truth, multicultural society rejects cultural neutrality because such neutrality runs counter to the virtues of multicultural citizenship. Cultural neutrality means that one takes no position on any culture including one's own. A person neither respects nor disrespects any cultural group, neither accommodates nor discommodes any, prefers living neither harmoniously nor discordantly with any."[75]

According to Heslop, multicultural societies do not advocate for neutrality because that would mean societies do not adapt any cultural perspective. Consequently, multicultural education programs should reject the notion of mere tolerance. Educators need to deal with this issue because, as contemplative educators indicate,[76] we should aim to live harmoniously in the world. This will only happen when students learn to move beyond mere tolerance and towards a genuine understanding that leads to an appreciation of a multitude of cultures. In order for this to occur, educators need a form of scholarship that moves away from colonization.

Said calls for a new form of decolonized scholarship that is informed and culturally sensitive to the power of representation. Said writes at the end of *Orientalism*,

> "As I have characterized in this study, Orientalism calls in question not only the possibility of nonpolitical scholarship but also the advisability of too close a relationship between scholar and the state. It is equally apparent, I think, that the circumstances making Orientalism a continuingly persuasive type of thought will persist: a rather depressing matter on the whole. Nevertheless there is some

> rational expectation in my own mind that Orientalism need not always be so unchallenged, intellectually, ideologically, and politically, as it has been."[77]

As Said foresaw, Orientalism still functions as a system that causes culturally insensitive misinformed representations of religions and cultures. Yet we live in a postcolonial world where we must deal with the diversity of religions and cultures. Thus, we need an educational solution to the persistent problem of Orientalism to prevent religious and cultural insensitivity, which occurs frequently through exoticism. There is a need for educators to locate themselves in this context of diversity from a postcolonial perspective that moves beyond a view of the cultural *Other*.

While critics of postcolonialism may agree that Said drives a wedge between the East and the West, this is not the case. Said acknowledges that the East and the West separates itself into an Eastern sphere and a Western sphere. On the one hand, it is important to separate Eastern and Western religions and cultures because it is imperative to remain in fidelity to traditions. On the other hand, Said offers a solution for interconnectedness by appealing to the East and the West to come together to learn about the respective religions and cultures within the spheres. This is the overlapping space that Said describes where he hopes scholars will serve as representatives of religions and cultures as opposed to misrepresentatives.

My project will address the imperative need to negotiate the boundaries of the Kuchipudi dancer who uses dance as an educational tool for non-Hindus in an effort to confront the problem of Orientalism. This project will focus on the pressing intercultural and interreligious needs of the East and the West, which calls upon scholars to rethink boundaries in education. As I urge scholars to rethink boundaries, this project adds to a

wider investigation in philosophy of education, contemplative education, dance education, and religious studies. The project is important in each respective discipline. Kuchipudi dance contains elements of contemplative pedagogy, artistic theatrical movement, and religion, yet Kuchipudi dance is not reducible to any of these fields. Kuchipudi dance exists in the intersection of these fields. Even though we can find powerful tools in the contemplative, dance, and religious studies educational literatures for theorizing a postcolonial dance practice, I will demonstrate how these fields fail to fully take into account the postcolonial realities of Kuchipudi dance in a world that needs to consider interreligious dialogue and intercultural relations.

Philosophers of education will learn about a philosophical educational theory that thinks about the process of teaching and learning with the realities of Orientalism and postcolonialism in mind. Contemplative educators will have the opportunity to learn about how Kuchipudi dance is in its own respect, a contemplative practice that applies contemplative pedagogy. Contemplative educators will be able to use Kuchipudi dance as a form of contemplative practice and contemplative pedagogy in the classroom. Dance educators will learn how to confront the issue of Orientalism and the realities of postcolonialism in *World Dance courses* and texts. Religious Studies educators will have the opportunity to use Kuchipudi dance to study Hinduism in a manner that does not Orientalize.

*Moving Forward: A Road Map For This Project*

For the purposes of this project, I will engage in a postcolonial self-study, which I will elaborate on in the following chapter. It is my hope that I shed light on how my

personal identity is intertwined with the residual effects of colonialism that are still present in today's society. I make myself vulnerable in this project as I engage in a dramatic plea to reevaluate Said's theory of Orientalism[78] to confront the thriving legacy of colonialism. A postcolonial self-study helps me to maximize the efficiency of this project, as I am on a quest to develop a de-Orientalized pedagogy to foster interreligious and inter-cultural relations.

I ask readers to read this text in its entirety to prevent Orientalist interpretations that might develop from eclectic reading. It is important to pay close attention to the way I use certain terms, which I attempt to unpack in the text. Readers should look for consistency across this text from a theoretical stance. I began this text with an introduction that aimed to position myself as a self-study researcher who acknowledges the way my past intertwines with my present that influences my future. This information is crucial to understanding how my identity impacts my theoretical perspective. It is imperative for readers to understand the self-study methodology, which I discuss in the following chapter, to comprehend the educational research method that I employ. After, I will move onto share my theoretical developments that advanced from my self-study. It is my hope that my self-study of how I use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism will shed light on an urgent need for a de-Orientalized pedagogy that considers postcolonial realities.

# Chapter 2 Research Methodology

The goal of this chapter is to outline my postcolonial self-study methodology, which informs this project. I begin with Edward Said whose method focuses on the personal as political and is an essential starting point for postcolonial scholarship. I attempt to demonstrate how this project adheres to the guiding criteria of the self-study methodology. Moreover, I will focus my attention on the data collection methods and analysis process that I used to provide insight on how my theory of de-Orientalized pedagogy develops. It is crucial for me to also mention how my Peer Scholars contribute to the trustworthiness of my analysis.

## *Postcolonial Self-Study*

To achieve the goals of this project, a philosophical method of analysis along with the self-study of a phenomenological personal experience are needed. Here is what I aim to accomplish in my dissertation project. 1) I will use a self-study methodology of my Kuchipudi dance practice to demonstrate the need for a postcolonial dance theory and the need for the implementation of postcolonial pedagogy, 2) I will use a philosophical method of analysis to demonstrate how the current educational literature germane to Kuchipudi dance fails to take into account the postcolonial reality facing female dancers in a Western context, and 3) I will develop a new theory of postcolonial dance that draws from contemplative, dance, and religious studies educational literatures but also moves beyond them.

My philosophical method requires me to engage in self-study of my teaching practices. The *American Education Research Association* (AERA) acknowledges the

need for self-study research in education. The *Self Study of Teacher Education Practices* SIG group of AERA states on the AERA website that the purpose of self-study is "To inform and rethink teacher education by studying practice-varied educational settings and methodologies."[79] My dissertation will involve self-study as a philosophical research methodology that aims to inform educators and rethink the theories and praxis of teaching. I will reflect on my usage of Kuchipudi dance as a pedagogical tool in a non-Hindu educational setting. Here, self-study is the most appropriate methodology because, as a reflective educator, I am concerned with my phenomenological experience that has a direct effect on my ability to use Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy successfully for non-Hindus. I am concerned with paying attention to my experience and linking my experience to my pedagogical practice.

Loughran states, "The use of the term self-study is used in relation to teaching and researching practice in order to better understand: oneself; teaching; learning; and, the development of knowledge about these."[80] The self-study methodology allows me to link theory and practice in a manner that will help me teach non-Hindus in a postcolonial world. This methodology of self-study coupled with philosophical analysis, which I will elaborate on in the methods section, is the most appropriate approach for this project. Philosophical research in education aims to connect philosophical theories to practice to move towards a healthy transformation that overcomes crisis. Koetting and Malis state the importance of philosophical theorizing:

> "Theorizing is a mode of philosophical inquiry….we work out of a theoretical framework that is very closely related to our own orientation to the world. This happens whether we are conscious of it or not. Furthermore, it is important that

> we reflect on that stance, we try to understand how that stance affects our practice and, vice versa, how the practice influences our theoretical stance."[81]

I work out of a postcolonial theoretical framework based on my own reality as a postcolonial Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer and educator. Throughout my project, I will acknowledge my need to reflect on my stance as a postcolonial Kuchipudi dancer who educates primarily non-Hindus. I will aim to understand how my pedagogy affects my contemplative practice of Kuchipudi dance and how this influences my philosophical theory. My philosophical research project is essentially an educational project that will connect my philosophical theory, which I will develop in the dissertation, to the contemplative practice of Kuchipudi dance and the usage of Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy for non-Hindus, whether on stage or in the classroom. It is my hope for Kuchipudi dancers, educators, and non-Hindus that this project will lead to a positive transformation that overcomes Orientalism. Thus, I plan to shed light on the realities of postcolonialism. I seek to help educators transform their own pedagogical practices, and aim to improve my own practice as an educator. This is an important criteria for self-study research. As LaBoskey writes:

> "The research is *improvement-aimed*; we wish to transform ourselves first so that we might be better situated to help transform our students, their students, and the institutional and social contexts that surround and constrain us.[82]

LaBoskey and other self-study researchers such as Kelchtermans and Hamilton[83] agree that self-study is a complex educational process that extends from learning to be a teacher in teacher education programs to becoming a teacher through engaging in a life-long learning process of determining what it means to teach. Russell[84] urges all educators to examine their own beliefs and educational practices because this will help to

improve teaching quality. This quest for improving is never-ending. Taylor and Coia refer to self-study in this manner: "Our self-study is not static. There is no meaningful sense in which it can be considered *done*, a chapter closed once it is written up and the lessons absorbed."[85] With this un-static approach to pedagogical development in mind, my dissertation project is the start of a life-long quest to engage in self-study as I aim to improve my pedagogy as an educator and reconstruct the field of teacher education practices.

The self-study methodology is based essentially on my phenomenological experience, which I will elaborate on in my methods section. As Spielgelberg writes:

> "By phenomenon I understand everything presented to us *directly*, i.e., without mediating inferences, exactly in the way it is presented to us. This implies that I do not contrast phenomena and objects but only phenomena and non-phenomena, i.e., non-presented objects. Every object if presented becomes a phenomena in this sense, acquiring thereby the additional character of phenomenality and losing it again if no longer presented. Accordingly, phenomena in this sense are not only, as it were, surface-phenomena, such as reflections, modes of appearance, perspective aspects, in short mere appearances; they also comprise what is given in and through these data, i.e., the appearing of the object itself in its role as being presented, in this sense the 'depth-phenomenon.'"[86]

While I use a self-study methodology, it is crucial for me to pay attention to my phenomenological experience to ensure that I link theory and practice for educators in a meaningful manner. I, as a Kuchipudi dancer, will use my body to engage in a presentation of Kuchipudi dance as a pedagogical tool to educate non-Hindus. The mode of appearance of the body and the dance will become a phenomenon for me. For this reason, I need to employ a self-study methodology that pays attention to my phenomenological experience as a philosophical method of analysis.

The self-study methodology will also keenly note how Orientalism directly affects my embodied experience of the dance and my ability to serve as an educator for non-Hindus within a postcolonial reality. For example, spectators may gaze upon the dance as mere theatrics and dramatization of so-called Hindu mythology. If I sense this, it will directly impact my ability to perform the dance, because the gaze I receive is not an educational gaze but rather an Orientalist gaze. Instead of serving as an educator for non-Hindus, my embodied experience might then be reduced to an Orientalized body of the Orient that does not serve my purpose. Rather, I will unintentionally add to Orientalist misperceptions of Hinduism. This is what I hope to prevent through my embodied experience. I will have to learn to move the Orientalist gaze to an educational gaze through my phenomenology. My project will address the need to develop a philosophical theory of education that I will implement for non-Hindus, based on my embodied, phenomenological experience, that I hope will overcome the Orientalism of Hinduism.

Before I relate my methods, it is crucial to acknowledge the postcolonial theoretical framework that informs this project. The theoretical framework of postcolonialism helps to determine the questions that arise from the self-study methodology and impacts the selection of the philosophical research methods, the epistemological assumptions underlying the methods, and the ethical commitments that guide the research. To begin, I describe Said's method for postcolonial research, which he used in his text *Orientalism*. This description will provide a foundation for me to explain how I will use Said's theoretical framework to study postcolonialism in relation to Kuchipudi Indian classical dance. Following this, I will provide a description of the

tools that I use for the introductory chapters of the dissertation as I describe my philosophical phenomenological method of analysis coupled with self-study. The goal here is to succinctly relate the method for this project.

Keep in mind that the theoretical framework was selected based on the main question of this project. How will I as a contemplative, philosopher of education move the exotic gaze of non-Hindus to an educational gaze that heightens awareness of Orientalism, and thus exhibit sensitivity for inter-religious relations and multiculturalism? To answer this question, I will employ a postcolonial theoretical framework to guide the underlying ideas that influence this research. Hamilton, a self-study expert, acknowledges the importance of providing an understanding of the "underlying knowledge/ideas/theories that influence teacher's pedagogical reasoning"[87] because this is the foundation for the teacher's pedagogy. The self-study research, once disseminated for others to view publicly, allows others to critique and determine how my theoretical framework and practices as an educator fits into the world at large in education.[88] The postcolonial theoretical framework influences my pedagogical reasoning as an educator.

Edward Said's study of Orientalism, in a postcolonial era, serves as my basic guide for this research because Said reminds me of my own experiences with colonialism. Simply stated, Said's overall approach deals with two interconnected positions. First, the researcher needs to define a *strategic location* that describes the author's position in a text. Strategic location concerns the lived experiences of the researcher, which causes the formation of a specific starting point. Here, I must consider how my own lived experiences influence my starting point as a researcher. Second, the

researcher engages in *strategic formation* to describe an analysis of the relationship between the texts that are analyzed.[89] Strategic formation concerns how the selected texts work together to illustrate a central thesis or shared underlying political, ideological, or cultural viewpoint. I must interconnect these two aspects of Said's approach because I cannot have a strategic formation without first interrogating the location of my position in the research. Below, I will provide a detailed outline to describe how I apply Said's strategic method that is a part of his postcolonial theoretical framework. I show how my study moves from my own strategic location as an educator who seeks to use Kuchipudi dance as a tool to enlighten non-Hindus about Eastern religion and culture to how the selected texts work together to form my thesis. I will also discuss the interpretative process that leads to concept formation.

*Starting from "what one really is": Defining My Strategic Location*

Said's postcolonial theoretical framework begins with one's self. Said's method, influenced by Michel Foucault, is a method that is based on an intellectual genealogy.[90] Said uses this method in his book *Orientalism* to discuss knowledge construction of the East through the history of Western colonization, charting the rise and dominance of Orientalist stereotypes and biases. Through a genealogical reconstruction of Orientalism, Said presents a way to correct misrepresentations of the East. Since there really is no beginning or end for the researcher, Said (1978) says to start with "what one really is".[91] According to Said's philosophical research method, researchers have to maintain an awareness of the massive topic at large. Then, researchers need to develop a manageable beginning, which is based on one's own phenomenological experiences. For this reason,

I acknowledge who I am as a faith-based Hindu, but I choose to maintain a focus on de-Orientalized pedagogy for non-Hindus in the project. Although I do not aim to create a dichotomy between Hindus and non-Hindus, it is imperative for me to develop a manageable starting point for myself as an educator. Since Hindus and non-Hindus each have contrasting issues due to the legacy of colonialism, I will confront this problem in separate projects. However, it is important to keep in mind that Hindus and non-Hindus are not separate entities but rather are part of a humanism tradition.

Before moving on with the description of Said's postcolonial theoretical framework that develops from his method, it is essential to describe who Edward Said is and how his identity informs his method in his book *Orientalism*. Said's memoir, *Out of Place*,[92] thoroughly describes his phenomenological experiences that led him to be the founding father of postcolonialism. Said was born in Jerusalem but lived in Cairo and W. Jerusalem. At the Gezira Preparatory School (GPS), Said had his first exposure to colonization as he literally lived it and experienced it phenomenologically.

> "All around me were Greenvilles, and Coopers, and Pilleys: starchy little English boys and girls with enviably authentic names, blue eyes, and bright, definite accents. I have no distinct recollection of how I sounded in those days, but I know that it was not English. The odd thing though was that we were all treated as if we should (or *really* wanted to) be English, an unexceptionable program for Dick, Ralph, and Derek, less so for locals like Micheline Lindell, David Ades, Nadia Gindy, and myself."[93]

Said was educated as if he "*really*" wanted to be English. The English teachers taught the students under the British system of education. The students were given an education that pushed them to develop themselves as a part of the West as opposed to a part of Eastern culture. This is precisely what occurred with my parents in Guyana. In fact, my

parents were among many who were forced to speak English, which caused the loss of a great part of Indian languages and dialects. On the one hand, it is unfortunate that Indians in Guyana and other Caribbean lands cannot speak fluent Hindi. On the other hand, it is very profound that the language of Hindi, and also the ancient language of Sanskrit, remains passed down from generation to generation to ensure the continuation of Hinduism regardless of geographical location.

The language of Creole,[94] broken English, developed in Guyana.

> "The creole language is English corrupted; a *patois* spoken by the uneducated people of British Guiana. It has no words of its own."[95]

There is a hidden power dynamic present in the way the author writes "creole" with a lower case "c" and "English" with an upper case "E." When Africans and Indians were taken to Guyana, they were forced to communicate in English, but they did not have an English education. With the lack of an English-speaking education in mind, the language of Creole developed. Guyanese people began to develop their own dialect, especially within villages. The British seemed to view Creole as a language spoken by "uneducated" people. This in turn caused Guyanese people themselves to see the newly developed Creole language as uncivilized, when this is not the case. Many people I know who speak Creole have a better education, in my opinion, than some English-speaking individuals. I have lived this very experience as a child growing up in America. My maternal and paternal side of the family speaks Creole. However, my mother asked all relatives to avoid speaking Creole around me because she wanted me to learn to speak "proper" English. However, now that I have learned English, I also know Creole. In fact, I enjoy listening to relatives speak the Creole that rolls naturally off of their tongues

in a very educated manner. Although Creole does not seem to come naturally to me, I find that Hindi and Sanskrit seem to flow naturally when I speak. I feel this is because I have a profound spiritual connection to Hindi and Sanskrit as a Hindu.

At any rate, Said's father sent Said, who became a U.S. citizen, to study in the U.S. because of the educational opportunity for meritocracy. Similarly, my Aja (paternal grandfather) sent my father to the U.S. to grasp an educational opportunity to move past the colonial era of the indentured servitude of Indians. Likewise, during Said's college years as an undergraduate at Princeton University, he continued to experience the colonizing effects of the West. At that time, Princeton was a solely male school with no blacks and only a handful of Arabs. Said pursued his graduate studies at Harvard where he read philosophers such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, which shaped his dissertation on Conrad. I relate to Said, because I experienced the colonizing effects of the West as I endured horrific bullying throughout my school experiences. Moreover, although I studied with noteworthy scholars, I still must confront how my identity intertwines with a colonial past, that I feel compelled to untangle.

Said began to put his identity struggles as an Easterner who lived in a Western world into his political writings, as I am now doing. As Said lived in the West, he realized that the West misrepresents the East because of an extensive history of false scholarship based on biased sources and inaccurate descriptions. I share this realization with Said who urgently named this problem *Orientalism*, which became the foundation for postcolonial studies. It is crucial to note that Said's memoirs indicate that his philosophical method began with his lived experience of feeling out of place – a feeling

that is very common to me. He felt displaced as the "Other" which caused him to acknowledge differences. As a result of his lived experiences, he realized that his location in the diaspora was *strategic* in that it gave him unique insight into the limitations of the Western approach to the East. Similarly, I too realize that my "out of place" feeling is not a limitation, but rather is a strategic location for me to pursue my educational research.

Like Said, my identity struggles within the American education system and also daily in my personal life as a Western woman of Eastern decent causes me to identify with Said's life experience and his theoretical framework and method of research. Said's work on Orientalism urges me to consider the way the West still misrepresents and misinterprets the East. Said informs my choice of self-study as a methodology because the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of Hinduism and Indian culture impacts on my phenomenological experiences as a Kuchipudi dancer who seeks to educate non-Hindus about Eastern religion and cultural practices.

*Textual Selection: Organizing a Strategic Formation*

Starting from the researcher's personal positionality, the postcolonial researcher needs to cut from the mass of relevant and seemingly irrelevant historical texts. Although it causes me to experience discomfort because it does not resonate with my actuality as a faith-based Hindu, I read troublesome misrepresentative texts about Hinduism to understand the phenomenon of Orientalism. Next, the researcher molds the mass, and creates a justified, textual starting point to define the problem.[96] To cut from the mass and mold the mass of historical data, Said uses historical analysis, geographical

analysis, and textual analysis of a wide variety of sources. This includes historical memoirs, works of fiction, colonialist reports, and academic texts. The reason for this wide textual selection is to demonstrate the scope of the all-pervasive nature of Orientalist visions of the East.

For example, Said reads dispersed texts by Orientalists such as Silvestre de Sacy, Ernest Renan, T. E. Lawerence, Louis Massignon, and Gib as well as Rudyard Kipling and Conrad.[97] Through this unorthodox set of non-fiction and fiction, Said points to the pervasive Orientalist biases that became an ideological backdrop that defines the West and the East against each other. For instance, Said read Gustave Flaubert's writings to show how Flaubert portrays the West's version of a stereotypical Egyptian woman.

> "There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were the historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to posses Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was 'typically Oriental.' My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled."[98]

The goal, for Said, is to understand and show how texts recapitulate unquestioned stereotypes in a manner that transforms cultural biases into a quasi-natural reflection of "how things actually are." In the above quote, he points out how the West stereotypes Egyptian women, which creates a misrepresentation of Egyptian women in Egyptian culture. This is similar to the stereotypes that I sense some non-Hindus maintain about me. The woman succumbs to the white, wealthy, man because he is the civilized man of strength and she is the so-called uncivilized passive woman. Kuchuk Hanem was an

Egyptian dancer who became a part of Flaubert's fictional writings when Flaubert visited her. Said focuses on fiction and non-fiction pieces of many other literary scholars as he shows how these scholars used their own Orientalized beliefs to develop an entire discipline of Orientalism to not only misrepresent the East but also to attempt to civilize the so-called uncivilized nature of the East. This last example of the Orientalization of Kuchuk Hanem leads into the third component of Said's postcolonial method.

*Textual Analysis: Exposure of Orientalist Biases and Development of Humanist Pragmatism*

Based on my interpretation of Said, philosophical researchers should look at how other authors define the terms they use in order to unpack Orientalist stereotypes, biases, and oversights that marginalize and/or distort Eastern religious and cultural practices. Then, philosophical researchers could move towards a more pragmatic, humanistic approach to the relationship between the East and the West. For this reason, I attempt to unpack controversial terms throughout this project. Said shows, throughout his work, how the terms used are vulnerable to the possibility of power manipulations that serve to conceal the complex nature of social realities and also hide unequal power relationships. Unpacking these terms helps Said move from an Orientalist to a de-Orientalized theory of religious cultural interaction.

For example, Said uses the term *knowledge* in his work. He discusses access to knowledge, knowledge construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction, but throughout the discourse, he makes a distinction between pure knowledge and political knowledge.

> "The distinction between pure and political knowledge…A scholar whose field is Soviet economics works in a highly charged area where there is much government

> interest, and what he might produce in the way of studies or proposals will be taken up by policymakers, government officials, institutional economists, intelligence experts. The distinction between 'humanists' and persons whose work has policy implications, or political significance, can be broadened further…Nevertheless the determining impingement on most knowledge produced in the West (and here I speak mostly about the United States) is that it be nonpolitical, that is scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisans or small-minded doctrinal belief…Yet this knowledge is not therefore automatically nonpolitical."[99]

Said distinguishes between pure knowledge and political knowledge by uniting the two terms. He says that society seems to separate the two types of knowledge because policy makers listen to economists as opposed to humanists. However, humanists produce knowledge that also has political implications. Just because policy makers do not take humanists seriously does not mean that humanists produce non-political knowledge. It seems that pure knowledge and political knowledge formulate a dangerous access to knowledge if separated. The aim of pure knowledge is to understand knowledge from the intended perspective in which the knowledge was constructed. With political knowledge, we infuse superiority and bias on what is being studied, since political knowledge influences government officials. This sometimes leads to what I will choose to call a *deceptive authority* because it seems that those who exercise political knowledge may not have the authority, outside of the political sphere, to make claims about certain subjects. Thus, the public sphere should have access to both pure knowledge and political knowledge.

Said discusses terminology in a deeper sense in his book *Freud and the Non-European*. In this text, Said indicates that the meaning of terms changes as scholars continue to philosophize.

> "My approach tries to see them in their context as accurately as possible, but then – because they are extraordinary writers and thinkers whose work has enabled other, alternative work and readings based on developments of which they could not be aware – I see them contrapuntally, that is, as figures whose writing travels across temporal, cultural and ideological boundaries in unforeseen ways to emerge as part of a new ensemble *along with* later history and subsequent art."[100]

Said suggests that we understand the author's intention of terminology. Thus, I engage in a dramatic plea with readers to attempt to understand why I use certain terms. We should then read other texts to see how other authors connect to the terminology and also read to determine if the terminology has changed. We can either choose to agree, to disagree, or to build on the meanings of the terms. For instance, Said uses the term "non-European" in two ways. First, he talks about the way Freud uses the term based on the history of the people at the time. Second, he talks about the way the term is used today in a post-World War II era.

To return to Said's postcolonial theoretical framework and philosophical research method, once the terms are defined, Said calls on us to first think about the underlying implications of both perspectives. Then, think about the connection between the two perspectives in a way that will help the perspectives connect in a pragmatic manner. For Said, even though there is a Western and an Eastern perspective, we cannot truly separate the two views because we do not live in a separate world. The histories of the Western and the Eastern world are intertwined. Thus, there needs to be a pragmatic way for the two spheres to live in this world together.

Said employs a postcolonial theoretical framework and a philosophical research method that helps him move forward with a pragmatic and democratic goal. He decides to explore the knowledge construction of the East by the West based on his experiences

of being an Easterner who engages in scholarly work in a Western world. His strategic location gives him a unique viewpoint on this issue. Thus, he starts with where he himself is in his personal dimension of his work.[101] Through his method, he relates the perspective of the East and the West. However, he does not separate these perspectives but rather overlaps them in an empty space. In this empty space, Said hopes an embedded pragmatic discussion can emerge. This in fact did happen in the political sphere of the East and the West because of Said's book *Orientalism*. Thus, Said encourages agents in the political sphere to think about the hybrid nature of the East and the West and in turn overrule the paradigm of Orientalism. Said's discourse is historical, contextual, and ongoing, despite his recent death, since the nature of the East and the West is constantly changing. Thus, there is a need for constant dialogue about the interaction between the East and West.

During this inevitable hybrid interaction, Said shows how to further engage in the interpretive process. Said demonstrates how he reads texts with a postcolonial lens so as to contradict the authors' intentions. Said points out the Orientalist biases, stereotypes, and visions of the authors as I also hope to do. Granted, the authors may not view themselves as colonialists, nevertheless the textual evidence which Said pinpoints establishes their unintentional reiteration of Orientalist biases. Said's criticism is vital because he reveals the concealed, pervasive nature of Orientalism. This crucial need for a postcolonial theoretical framework that arises in Said's interpretive process is essential for my own method. For example, while I read texts from the Hindu dance literature, I also read dance literature that refers to Hinduism in texts from the West. The relevant

Hindu texts help me to build a thorough understanding of Hindu dance from within a Hindu perspective. This allows me to engage in a de-Orientalized critique capable of revealing the concealed Orientalist biases in non-Hindu texts that discuss Hindu dance.

Because Said understood the intention of Eastern literature, he was able to critique a Western interpretation. Through his strategic formation of Eastern and Western texts, he attempted to bridge the gap between the East and the West. Likewise, I engage in philosophical theoretical research as a part of my philosophical research project in a manner that moves between my strategic location and strategic formation of texts. I seek a new approach to cross-cultural education that goes beyond the Orientalist framework. It is my hope to build on Said's work as I attempt to further build the bridge between the East and the West. Said inspires me to focus on the usage of Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to teach about Eastern literature in the West.

Before I outline how my own research embodies Said's postcolonial theoretical framework, it is important to note that Said's framework and method is established in not only the field of postcolonialism, but also in philosophy of education. Postcolonial scholars and educators show that Said provides a viable theoretical framework and method for philosophical analysis. At this point, I will describe the work of postcolonial scholars followed by the work of educators to show how these intellectuals employ Said's method. My goal here is to develop a comprehensive sense of Said's postcolonial theoretical framework and method with both educational theory and philosophy. This helps to position my research project in relation to broader discussions of postcolonialism and the de-colonization of educational research.

I now turn to the literature in postcolonial studies of education to show how educators employ Said's method. Dimitriadus[102] eloquently argues that Said reminds educators of their intellectual obligations as scholars in a world where education is becoming increasingly a part of corporatization. Dimitriadus takes Said's postcolonial theory and succinctly relates it to the practice of educators. One specific article by Dimitriadus begins with a discussion of Said's postcolonial theory in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994).[103] Dimitriadus refers to Said's perspective of the East and the West as Dimitriadus writes,

> "For Said such categories and stereotypes most typically served elite interests, and it was the moral duty of the intellectual to always call them into question. The intellectual was always an outsider, on the margins….The true intellectual has a personal signature, one that cannot be contained within the parameters of a particular profession or field, one that resists the easy clichés that preserve the status quo."[104]

Dimitriadus uses Said's method to show that each intellectual in academia endures a constant struggle between negotiating the parameters of their academic discipline while also dealing with the overlapping boundaries. He moves onto say that academics must be careful of the dangerous term *professional expert* because our disciplines undergo a constant change due to the hybridity of cultures. This means that we can never be experts but actually only amateurs. Said felt the work of amateurs was crucial because these individuals had humility with their scholarship that did not involve uncontestable truth claims. Dimitriadus shows educators how to develop a philosophy of education based on postcolonial realities and the hybrid nature of cultures. This philosophy of education must confront the pressures of accountability and high stakes

testing as educators need to maintain intellectual integrity despite the strenuous pressures of administrations. Dimitriadus states,

> "As we face increasing pressures for accountability in times of scarcity we must fight for our intellectual autonomy and integrity. Echoing Said, we have responsibilities to our institution and disciplinary positions….While holding on to the notion of professional competence, it is critical to avoid the inevitable pulls of specialization, expertise, and power."[105]

On the one hand, educators are a part of the pressures for accountability, but on the other hand, educators need to maintain integrity and professional competence. Said was never comfortable within one sphere or the other. Similarly, Dimitriadus shows that educators are a part of not only a pedagogical sphere that involves professional competence but also inevitably part of a messy political sphere. Thus, it is important for educators to remind themselves of their intellectual moral obligations both inside and outside of the political realities of education.

Nozaki[106] uses Said's method to point out that these realities include national and individual conflicts. Thus, educators should not invite Easterners to speak to Western students without thinking about the contradictory nature that the non-Westerner may pose. Bluntly put, non-Westerners may apply Orientalism to their own culture because of their own, individual postcolonial realities. The East and the West are not based on ethnicity but rather on ideals. Not all Easterners will fall under the category of the East just as not all Westerners will fall under the category of the West. Hall[107] provides a factual historical account to show the dangers of the categories of the so-called East and the so-called West. Hall goes beneath the surface of Said's notion of Orientalism to show historically how the West dangerously imposed a Western sociological system on the rest

of the world. Nozaki reminds educators that individual identities and national identities are full of contradictory conflicts because of the postcolonial realities of the past and the present. Therefore, it is important for educators to consider who speaks to their class because the professional competence and integrity of teachers are at stake.

Another crucial aspect of Dimitriadus's work involves specialized academic disciplines. Said's method urges Dimitriadus to help academics acknowledge that they need to engage in a discussion with each other to further opportunities and acknowledge postcolonial realities. Rizvi and Lingard[108] discuss this pressing need based on Said's theoretical framework and method. For example, psychologists and postcolonial scholars should work together to determine what their space of overlapping is and how this space provides further opportunities for both disciplines. This application of Said's postcolonial theory is crucial for educators within the academy.

Like Dimitriadus, Rizvi and Lingard[109] discuss how Said's postcolonial theoretical framework and method help educators develop a postcolonial pedagogy that aims to represent the hybrid nature of not just cultures, but the discipline of education.

> "If one of the aims of education is to enhance intellectual work, then we have much to learn from Said's discussion of how it might best be organized so that it takes account of the worldliness of the text and the critic. Said's writings on humanism and democratic criticism are equally significant to an exploration of the cultural politics of education, in that they suggest a set of pedagogic values that provide a way out of nihilistic critique and relativism and point to a way in which humanism can be rethought, especially in a globalized world increasingly dominated by the rampant individualism of the market."[110]

The educational values of postcolonial pedagogy apply Said's theoretical framework and method to consider the importance of the "worldliness of the text and the critic." Educators should not engage in a one-way relationship with students based on nihilistic

and relativistic pedagogy. On the contrary, educators need to see themselves as scholars who are in constant transformation with their students despite the strenuous pressures of the market.

Nozaki provides an in depth example of postcolonial pedagogy that takes into consideration the nature of school curricula.

> "One must take a critical look at the issues of curriculum and knowledge as they relate to teaching about Asia. Curriculum is a site of power struggles, and thus the outcomes of these struggles are not pre-determined. However, one should also acknowledge that curriculum is often a means of hegemonic power, especially in the way it represents people, histories, cultures, and so forth."[111]

Postcolonial pedagogy considers the power struggles within the school curriculum. The curriculum itself has a potential to represent or misrepresent cultures. As Nozaki indicates, based on Said's method, educators need to apply a postcolonial pedagogy that is aware of the potential Orientalism that may occur in the curriculum, which might portray material to the students based on an "us and them" structure. This literature demonstrates how a postcolonial theoretical framework is used in educational theory. I will continue philosophical research as I apply and extend a postcolonial theoretical framework.

The main question that guides the research for the following chapters confronts the problem of exoticism. My goal is to state how my phenomenological experience as a dancer helps me to teach in a manner that provokes a critical, self-reflexive educational gaze that overcomes exoticism and the compartmentalization of religion and culture. My research serves as a puzzle piece in the overview of the postcolonial literature because

my project shows how Said's theory of Orientalism remains vital for reimagining education in a postcolonial world.

I apply Said's theory of Orientalism to point out biases, which I then attempt to rectify through a de-Orientalization of texts. I use Said's interpretative process to acknowledge the Orientalist biases. While Said focuses on building the concept of Orientalism, I focus on building the interpretive process of the de-Orientalization of education. My self-study methodology takes Said's method a step further as I use my body to engage in a phenomenological experience through Kuchipudi dance that aims to educate non-Hindus. Specifically, my research focuses on the de-Orientalization of Kuchipudi dance, which in turn allows the usage of Kuchipudi dance to serve as a pedagogical tool to educate non-Hindus about religion and culture.

*Why a Self-Study Methodology?: Guiding Criteria*

Through the engagement of a self-study, I will question how I use Kuchipudi dance to teach non-Hindus and examine my phenomenological experience of whether or not I, as an educator, am able to move my phenomenological experience of various types of gazes to a predominantly educational gaze. This problem may also pertain to other performers, including Christian liturgical dancers, who use their bodies to convey a pedagogical message. LaBoskey[112] provides criteria to guide the self-study researcher. In a self-study methodology, teachers examine their philosophy of education because of a desire to be a better teacher who does not grow static but rather is in a constant transformational phase that keeps up with the world that is in a continuous change. For this reason, self-study is *improvement-aimed*. The self-study methodology allows me to

question why I dance what I dance and how I use dance as a pedagogical tool to educate non-Hindus about the East. I aim to improve my pedagogy to teach about Hinduism through Kuchipudi dance. Self-study transcends simple reflection because self-study teacher education researchers continuously seek to transform themselves as educators and professionals. The self-study research is never completely closed. On the contrary, my self- study research is ongoing throughout the professional lifespan of me as an educator and dancer.

LaBoskey's second criteria stresses the *interactive* nature of self-study. There is a need for interaction with others because "all research is necessarily constrained and influenced by the subjectivity of the investigator(s)."[113] Interaction allows the self-study researcher to learn from others as the researcher's assumptions are confirmed or challenged. I will interact with my colleagues to gain multiple perspectives that will help me confirm or challenge my beliefs as an educator. These interactions occur through several mediums of correspondence. For instance, during an in-person conversation, my colleague Michael Canaris from the American Academy of Religion, asked me if I thought I was a liturgical dancer. Michael persuaded me to inquire into what liturgical dance is and to determine whether or not I am a liturgical dancer. Once I analyzed the literature about liturgical dance, I then engaged in a lengthy email correspondence with my colleague Donna La Rue, a Christian liturgical dancer and independent scholar, from Massachusetts. Donna and I shared a great deal with each other about our respective dance practices. I composed a document with our correspondence to allow me to

compare and contrast liturgical dance, Christian liturgical dance, and Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. I will discuss my findings in an upcoming chapter in this project.

The third criteria to guide self-study according to LaBoskey involves the use of multiple, qualitative methods. Self-study is a methodology for self-study researchers. From the methodological lens of self-study, researchers creatively develop data collection strategies. There is no particular method for data collection that self-study researchers must use. Rather, self-study researchers may employ a variety of strategies to engage in a self-study. My data collection is not limited to specific instances, but rather spans the space of my lifetime. As I began this project, I shared a part of my life's history to position myself as a self-study researcher. My personal narrative is a part of my data collection because it helps to frame my individual identity that is interconnected with my ancestry, future generations, and the world.

While my entire being is a part of my data collection, I do focus on specific time periods when I dance. What I mean by time periods is that I write a journal entry for my experiences before, during, and after specific dance presentations. I will write in my journal, and include photographs, visual recordings, audio recordings, and any other information or objects that I feel relates to my phenomenological experience. Before my dance presentations, I often collect different types of data, which I write about in my journal entry. When I present for classes, I read the class readings and critically think about the text. I often read about the campus history if I am unfamiliar with the campus. If I present for a conference, I frequently read as much as I can about the history of the sections that I present for. Moreover, I read the faculty biographies of the section chairs

in some cases. This all helps me to gain familiarity to position myself as a self-study researcher and also decide on how I should proceed with my pedagogy for the presentation. During the presentations, I often ask a colleague to photograph me during the event as well as record the presentation for me to view subsequently. After I compose a journal entry with my meta-conversation that analyzes my narrative, I deliberate with my *Peer Scholars*, which I will elaborate on later in this chapter, to examine common themes that arise. Essentially, I will use journaling as my data collection method and also plan to develop a portfolio with selected journals to share with the professional community at large.

Fourth, LaBoskey asks self-study researchers to share their work in a professional community. This allows the educator to be the teacher and the researcher simultaneously. Self- study researchers need to provide a space for others to deliberate about the research. This allows the self-study researcher to still engage in improvement-aimed pedagogy even if the research is already published. In other words, once the self-study researcher has shared their research with a professional community, whether through publishing or another means, then the self-study researcher needs to allow others to deliberate about the research because this will help the self-study educator improve pedagogy. Essentially, I aim to improve my pedagogy as an educator who uses dance to educate non-Hindus. The following sections will elaborate on this.

*Data Collection Methods: Journaling*

I will continue to record my experiences in my main source of data, which is my dance journal. Each time I present a lecture and dance, I record my phenomenological

experiences after the presentation in my journal as an independent document, which I file electronically in a folder for that particular theatrical event, invited lecture, conference, or class presentation. I make a note of the date, location, and type of viewers (undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, etc.). I include handouts that I develop, PowerPoint presentations, and other electronic notes in the file. For the dissertation project, I composed journal entries for each dance and lecture ranging from September 2011 – December 2014. While I have confined the data collection to a certain time period, it is important to note that self-study is an ongoing methodological project. Therefore, I will continue to engage in a self-study methodology even after the dissertation project is completed.

Journal writing is a crucial form of data collection for educators who engage in self-study methodology.[114] My dissertation is a philosophical project that focuses on an embodied aspect of contemplative dance pedagogy with postcolonial realities in mind. Therefore, my dance journal serves as a guide of my phenomenological experiences as a dancer who applies Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy for non-Hindus to deal with a long history of Orientalism. Kirk discusses the importance of journal writing:

> "Field notes and journals serve as the critical, practical tool of reflexivity; they are the place in which to capture the fleeting thoughts, questions, images, and ideas, and the place from which to start when engaging in longer analysis and theorizing of them."[115]

Journal entries allow reflective practitioners to record their thoughts and experiences. The entries spark the educator to engage in an in depth analysis that allows theoretical growth. Said demonstrates this in *Out of Place A Memoir*.[116] This vulnerable text shows

how Said's recorded phenomenological experiences, both personal and professional, lead him to theorize about Orientalism.

Coia and Taylor discuss their purpose for recording experiences through writing:

> "Our writing group opened a space and time away from the everyday constraints of school where teachers could problematize their past and present teaching, validate beliefs and experiences, and mold their future teaching practices."[117]

Journal writing allows me to engage in a critical reflection about my teaching experiences with the goal of becoming an improved educator. I pay close attention to the types of questions that non-Hindus ask during the applicable question and answer sessions and how I feel about answering the questions. Am I able to maintain a postcolonial position or do I fall into a hole of intimidation because of the depth of colonialism and Orientalism?

I developed a format for the dance journal based on an awareness of the need for a postcolonial form of contemplative pedagogy that helps to de-Orientalize Kuchipudi dance for non-Hindus. The five senses link the body and the mind together. Thus, I pay close attention to my five senses, experience during the dance, spirituality level, and gazes I receive phenomenologically. As I record the journal entries, I ask myself certain questions. How do I feel before, during, and after the lecture and performance? This question is crucial because it helps me to acknowledge whether or not I am able to engage in contemplative practices as an educator. I ask myself how I perceive the surrounding environment. This includes my perceptions of other individuals' perceptions of me as well as how the surrounding environment affects how I feel before, during, and after the lecture and performance. My main question for myself occurs after I dance.

How do I feel I used Kuchipudi dance to relate Hinduism to the viewers within the setting? To answer this question, I pay close attention to the gazes I received phenomenologically during my presentation. I do not claim to know what the viewers think but rather I aim to determine how my interpretation of my experience of receiving various gazes makes me feel phenomenologically, which means my own first account of how I experience my own sensory qualities that cause me to develop certain epistemological stances about the world.

Beer[118] states that journal entries are not limited to written language but may also include artifacts such as photographs, drawings, found objects, etc. Each time I perform a Kuchipudi dance, I write in my dance journal. I state the purpose of the particular Kuchipudi dance as well as write down a description of my dance costume. For teaching presentations, I usually wear a shalvar, which is typically the attire dance students wear to dance class or for rehearsals. At conferences, I usually wear the traditional Kuchipudi outfit. I state, in my journal, the reasons I selected these particular outfits. I record my experiences before the dance, during the dance, and after the dance in my journal. My dance journal essentially serves as a teaching tool for me to use to self reflect about my pedagogical usage of dance. This allows me to determine my identity as an educator. Taylor and Coia relate the necessity of this task. "We need to acknowledge we bring who we are, as the students bring who they are to each pedagogical encounter."[119]

I include theatrical ballet-type performances, presentations at conferences mostly for faculty and graduate students, and invited teaching presentations in undergraduate

classrooms. I think of these events as moving from the macro to the micro. Tidwell and Fitzgerald write:

> "To begin research of teaching through self study, one needs to think about the context of self within the teaching environment and about practice in terms of roles, actions, and beliefs. Grounding one's values and beliefs allows self study to examine issues of relevance that will make a difference in practice."[120]

I aim to think of not just one particular teaching space, but rather the contexts in which I teach non-Hindus. Since I teach during theatrical performances, at conferences, and in undergraduate classrooms, I need to include all of these environments in my journal. I think about my role as a teacher and self-study researcher in each of the settings. As I ground my values and beliefs by writing in my journal, I engage in a self-study methodology that will help me improve my pedagogy.

The theatrical event provides me with the opportunity to educate in a manner that de-Orientalizes false interpretations of theatrical Hindu dance. Moreover, it allows me to engage in a phenomenological experience that has the potential to fulfill the spiritual intention of Kuchipudi dance. There is a difference between my phenomenological experience during an eight-hour dance ballet-style theatrical piece and a single dance at a conference.

The conferences allow me to educate educators and future educators about Eastern religion and culture. This is crucial because the professors and graduate students who aspire to be professors need to be aware of the postcolonial realities before they can address it in the classroom. My phenomenological experience forces me to confront my Eastern and Western identities that extend beyond the dance piece. For example, sometimes I feel conference organizers look at me in the Kuchipudi costume as a young

woman out of "professional attire". After I presented a paper and dance session at the *Mid Atlantic American Academy of Religion 2012 Annual Meeting*, I told my colleague Scott Strednak Singer, who was the Graduate Student Representative for the region, that I was going to change into my "professional attire", which was a business skirt and suit jacket. Scott smiled and said, "But Sabrina, you *are* in your professional attire." This was a crucial, phenomenological moment for me. I realized then that my dance "costume" was not just my "costume" but rather was my professional attire that might be compared to the professional attire of Catholic priests, choir members, or liturgical dancers. The conferences allow me to engage in such phenomenological moments that cause me to see the hybridity of my experiences as an Easterner and Westerner.

Aside from the conferences, the classroom experiences are especially vital. It is where I engage in my theory of Kuchipudi dance *as* pedagogy to educate non-Hindus. In the classroom, I don't discuss or theorize about postcolonialism. Rather, I confront postcolonial realities by engaging in a de-Orientalization without telling students what de-Orientalization is. For example, I visited an *Introduction to Religious Studies* class at Fairfield University in Connecticut. The students used a text by James C. Livingston entitled *Anatomy of the Sacred*.[121] I met the professor for the course at the *Mid Atlantic American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. He is a Catholic theologian who did not study Hinduism, but taught about Hinduism using the Livingston text. My role was crucial as I refuted Livingston's Orientalized version of Hinduism and related philosophical points from the Hindu scriptures to the class. The dance that I performed for the class helped provide them with an introductory de-Orientalized experience of

Hinduism. The students' comments and questions caused me to feel like I used Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy to engage in a de-Orientalization of false interpretations of Hinduism and Indian culture. This is a great internal reward of teaching. I could not have that same experience when dancing in a theatrical performance or conference.

Thus, I aim to record my dances in front of a wide variety of individuals, in a variety of locations in order to determine how different settings and gazes affect my performance as an educator who seeks to educate non-Hindus. This helps me to better understand the diverse opportunities and obstacles that I must deal with as a postcolonial dancer. My phenomenological experience in each entry helps me to develop contemplative practices as an educator who uses Kuchipudi dance to educate non-Hindus with postcolonial realities in mind.

*Analysis*

I engage in a continuous comparison as I look for common themes, dilemmas, and pedagogical implications that emerge in my journal entries through a constant comparative method[122] of analysis. Glaser and Strauss's seminal text[123] provides insight on how to engage in theoretical development through an analysis of qualitative data. The researchers claim that qualitative researchers often verify existing theories or contribute a relatively small insight. This misses the impact that qualitative research has to contribute to theoretical development. With this pressing research concern in mind, Glaser and Strauss focus on how to engage in a comparative method of analysis to theorize.

A vital aspect of the comparative method involves the identification of common themes across the data. Glaser and Strauss[124] assert the need to ascertain themed patterns

across the data to determine what the general concepts are. From this analysis, the self-study researcher develops a larger theoretical stance, which is then compared to new data that arises to build support or determine modifications to the developing theory. Glaser and Strauss recommend engaging in coding and analysis simultaneously to allow a critical perspective to develop about the data.

As I analyzed my data, I noticed five emerging common core themes: Pedagogical Spaces, Hindu Metaphysics, Gazes, Genre of Literature, and Religious Experience. I created a table in Microsoft Word to focus on specific parts of each journal entry related to each theme. Afterwards, I analyzed my data to uncover the subthemes within each large theme. I grouped all the subthemes for each larger theme to determine the commonalties across the data. A series of specific parts of my journal entries follow each subtheme in my data set.

Theme one focuses on pedagogical spaces. Before I can teach, I need to understand the space that I will teach and dance in. I noticed that each type of space warrants a particular pedagogical style. For this reason, I pay close attention to my subthemes, which include the classroom space, conference space, invited lecture space, and the theatrical space. Although I acknowledge that I also teach in Hindu spaces, I will focus on the previously mentioned spaces for the purposes of this project. In Chapter Three, I elaborate on how I teach in each pedagogical space. When I am invited to teach in a variety of pedagogical spaces, many assume that I am a liturgical dancer. For this reason, I confront the assumption that I am a liturgical dancer in Chapter Four.

Once I am in the pedagogical space as an educator, I need to pay close attention to the gazes that I experience because the gazes have the potential to further Orientalism. Theme two deals with the gazes that I experience phenomenologically as I present about Hinduism through dance in a variety a pedagogical spaces. The subthemes focus on the gazes that emerge throughout my data. While I warrant a sacred gaze, some still express an exotic gaze. I hope to provoke an educational gaze that confronts misconceptions of Hinduism. Yet, I sometimes experience a confrontational gaze phenomenologically. Chapter Five will convey the nature of the gazes that I experience.

The most common misconception of Hinduism that I encounter when I teach about Hinduism through Kuchipudi dance deals with Hindu metaphysics. Theme three focuses on Hindu metaphysics as a part of my religious experience as a faith-based Hindu and educator. It is crucial for me to acknowledge how I experience Hindu metaphysics. My subthemes focus on the academics of Hindu metaphysics and my experience of Hindu metaphysics. The first subtheme looks at my feeling of Oneness with God. The second subtheme explores the contemplative concept of interconnectedness. The third subtheme develops because I seem to consistently link why I dance to my purpose as a human in this world. The fourth subtheme uses discussions to confront the misconception of Hinduism as a polytheistic religion. Chapter Six will move into depth about Hindu metaphysics since this is a topic that I must engage in when I teach about Hinduism through dance.

There is another common misconception that the Hindu epics are mere mythology. Since this misconception often arises when I dance scenes from the Hindu

epics, it is imperative that I confront this claim. For this reason, theme four focuses on the genre of literature that the Hindu epics and scriptures fall under. The subthemes include Hinduism as historical, metaphorical, and mythological. In addition, another subtheme explores the dance technique used as a particular kind of genre. Chapter Seven will explore Hinduism as a historical, metaphorical literature genre. Because Hinduism is a religion with a specific structure, it is imperative to employ creativity with caution when translating Hindu scriptures, attempting to develop a Hindu novel, or choreograph a Hindu dance piece. With the issue of Orientalism in mind, I discuss the dangers of creativity in Chapter Eight.

Theme five, an overall theme across my project, focuses on religious experience. My subthemes develop based on my phenomenological experiences as a faith-based Hindu and educator. The first subtheme focuses on the direct connection that I feel to a Supreme Being. The second subtheme pays attention to my connection to nature. The third subtheme considers the powerful connection that I feel to my ancestors. The fourth subtheme spotlights the interconnectedness of my connections. The fifth subtheme confronts a blocked religious experience.

Although my self-study is on-going, I feel it is crucial to provide a concluding chapter for the purposes of this project. In Chapter Eight, I will return to the key questions for this project in an attempt to succinctly point to my theoretical stance on a de-Orientalized postcolonial pedagogy for teaching about Hinduism. I will point to limitations of my self-study and discuss the major implications.

As I continue with my life long self-study, I will consistently look back to the data, coupled with the literature, for further interpretation and analysis. Clift relates this as a common method of analysis for prospective teachers. "Self study is enriched when the practitioner engages in looking back at past practices and past contexts to assist reflection on current contexts and practices."[125] I will review my journal entries to determine how certain factors may influence my future pedagogical practices. Thus, the journal entries serve as a way for me to improve my pedagogy.

Tidwell and Fitzgerald describe "the teaching role as one and the same as the studenting role."[126] The teacher becomes a student at the same time while teaching. Just as students learn from the teacher, the teacher learns from the student. My role as a self-study researcher is to position myself as a teacher but also as a student simultaneously. As a teacher, my role is to serve as a facilitator who does not claim to have all-encompassing knowledge. I aim to use dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism with postcolonial realities in mind. However, I provide a space for philosophical inquiry about Hinduism as opposed to presenting an absolute list of criteria that defines Hinduism.

*Trustworthiness*

While I am aware of my own inner experiences as I present about Hinduism in a variety of pedagogical spaces, there are things that may escape me. Even though my journal allows me to engage in self-reflection, it is also crucial for me to share my phenomenological experiences with a group of trusted colleagues. Qualitative researchers call this a "critical friend".[127] Ham and Kane[128] discuss the importance of

sharing self-study research with a collaborative group of colleagues who some researchers call "critical friends". They write:

> "This is not to deny that reflecting on one's own experience is inherently problematic as a form of knowing. There is, indeed, a risk when *I* am the source of so much of *my* data, a danger that *my* own voice is the only one listened to in a self study, and of an inbred self-referencing in the representation of that data that dissipates rather concentrates meaning."[129]

I do not wish to simply justify and rationalize my pedagogy as an educator in self-delusionary manner. Rather, I wish to engage in a critical self-analysis with the help of my colleagues in a manner that helps me confront my own perceptions as I aim to serve as a postcolonial educator in a non-Hindu sphere.

Bodone, Guojónsdóttir, and Dalmau call this deliberation *collective agency*.[130] In collective agency, the individual who engages in a self-study establishes the conditions for research, aims to create educational knowledge, and then recreate teacher education. My work is collective agency because I establish particular conditions for this research. The conditions are that I teach in primarily non-Hindu academic spaces for this project. I aim to create educational knowledge that shows educators how to confront misconceptions about Hinduism. This will recreate teacher-education, as educators will maintain an awareness of Orientalism with a postcolonial pedagogy. Self-study researchers who collaborate on the *Handbook of Self Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* agree that there is no definitive way to engage in self-study. Each self-study researcher will approach self-study in a unique, phenomenological manner. The key to self-study research is to have a space to discuss the phenomenological study

of self to prevent self-delusion or the mere rationalization of behaviors. Kelchtermans and Hamilton state,

> "What is essential in self study is that we intentionally and systematically involve the voices of others in reflection and response to the ideas we generate in our study of ourselves in relationship to our teaching practices."[131]

For this reason, I will deliberate with not just my dissertation committee but with "critical friends," whom I will call my *Peer Scholars*. This group of Peer Scholars is not a group of co-researchers, subjects, research participants, or part of my dissertation committee. The Peer Scholars is a subcommittee of trusted colleagues that I share my phenomenological experiences with as they help me to acknowledge my prejudices. While the goal of the dissertation committee is to guide me through theoretical development, the aim of the subcommittee of Peer Scholars is to provide me with a safe space that allows me to be vulnerable as I share my phenomenological discoveries without concealing experiences. Taylor and Coia state, "We bring our whole selves to the classroom, which often results in sharing vulnerabilities. This is uncomfortable but necessary."[132] I accept a vulnerable position as I share my dance journal with my Peer Scholars because it is necessary for me to do so in order to improve my pedagogy as an educator. LaBoskey[133] indicates that teachers who acknowledge their own vulnerabilities learn how to create a safe learning environment. My hope is to gain critical feedback that prevents mere self-rationalization and instead allows critical self-reflection. Self-study researchers agree that while self-study involves the study of the self, the self is not a compartmentalized subject. On the contrary, self-study involves allowing the self to engage in a critical reflection while seeking to collaborate with others. This helps the

self-study researcher to maintain a critical, non-delusional perspective that hears the multiple voices of others:

> "By acknowledging that the self is not independent or unitary we have attempted to develop collaborations where we can listen to multiple voices informing our own understanding of teacher education and shaping of our practices."[134]

My selected Peer Scholars were individuals who were already like "critical friends" to me. These individuals are trusted individuals who have seen me engage in invited class, conference, lecture, and theatrical presentations. After I record my journal entry for a presentation, I deliberate with my Peer Scholars. This deliberation sometimes includes Skype conversations, email exchanges, phone conversations, and/or in person meetings between my Peer Scholars and me. I use the information from the deliberation to help me think about how to improve my pedagogy, confirm by beliefs, and challenge my assumptions. As I share a brief background of my Peer Scholars, I will not state their names because I hope to protect their privacy.

For the purposes of this project, my main Peer Scholar for my journal deliberations is a white male in his mid-twenties. He has a Masters of Arts degree in History and Culture from Drew University. He was born and raised in Hooksett, New Hampshire. Across the country, he has a half brother and a half sister who are twenty years older than he is. He also has a brother who is three years younger. When he was child, he attended Grace Episcopal Church in Manchester, New Hampshire with his family. He went to Sunday school and Church services until he became an undergraduate student. Although he was never close to a religious tradition, the Bible had an influence on him.

My Peer Scholar grew up deaf, which caused him to feel isolated as a child. He became a reader by nature because he felt that it was difficult for him to socialize. Eventually he overcame the challenges of socialization and made friends in high school. Currently, with the ability to hear due to hearing aides, he has many friends who do not know sign language. He attended college as an undergraduate at Keene State College in Keene, New Hampshire followed by Graduate School at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. As a historian of the text, his academic research concentrates on the history of sexuality and the body. His Masters thesis focuses on the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

I am grateful that I met him at Drew University when I was invited by Karen Pechilis to provide a campus-wide lecture and Kuchipudi dance on the *Ramayana*. It was a struggle for me to find someone who I could make myself vulnerable with as I deliberate about very sensitive data. A few days after I presented at Drew University, he emailed me. We immediately became academic pen pals as we began to discuss what we consider to be serious intellectual issues. Soon, we developed a sense of trust, which led to friendship.

After a few months of continuous intellectual discourse, I asked him to serve as my Peer Scholar for my self-study project. We deliberated about the past journal entries in my data set. I emailed my journal entries one by one and he responded using track changes in Microsoft Word. We discussed each journal entry through email exchanges until we both felt comfortable moving on to the next entry. We discussed common themes across the entries. From that point forward, I emailed my journal entry for each

presentation as soon as I composed the entry. We continued to deliberate using the track changes in Microsoft Word, email exchanges, and also met on the Drew University campus.

One of my esteemed mentors, a professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Montclair State University, is also one of my Peer Scholars. He is a white male in his mid-seventies who has no siblings. Although he was conceived in Illinois, his birth occurred in Des Moines, Iowa. When he was about a year old, his family moved to Binghamton, New York. Around the age of three, his family relocated to Camden, Arkansas. Then, he lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee when he was about four years old. He spent time in Winter Park, Florida when he was between the ages of five and eight. Due to his parents influence as Methodists, he joined Boy Scouts and became interested in going to a Methodist Church at a young age. As a youth, he saw himself as a religious individual who participated every Sunday in Sunday School, main services, youth fellowships, and evening services. He admits that he enjoyed attending the Methodist Church because of the community and the co-ed retreat trips.

Afterwards, he lived in Savannah, Georgia from about the age of eight years old to the age of seventeen. Between the ages of eleven and fifteen, he drifted away from the Methodist Church and towards Unitarianism. This transition took place when his uncle sent his mom Unitarianism literature. When he began to read the literature, he became fascinated with Unitarianism and theology. He also explored the Episcopalian dimension of Christianity because many of his classmates in high school were a part of this faith. Soon, he read David Elton TrueBlood's book entitled *The Logic of Belief: An*

*Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. At that point, he started to doubt the existence of God.

Next, he moved to St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland where he majored in General Humanities. Following this, at the age of twenty-one, he went to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island where he became a graduate student of philosophy. He has a Masters and Ph.D. from Brown University. After graduating, he secured a teaching position in philosophy for six years at Stonybrook University while in lived in St. James, a small town in Long Island, New York. During his early thirties, he relocated to Montclair State College where he spent forty plus years teaching.

He often taught Introduction to Philosophy, Logic, Philosophy of Religion, and Philosophy of Mind. He organized weekly Philosophy and Religion Club meetings for faculty and students. I formed a bond with him as we spent many hours working on academic projects, such as coordinating the Philosophy and Religion Club meetings. Throughout time, I developed a great sense of trust with him. We spoke about many personal parts of my life that connected to the purpose of my self-study. I felt comfortable enough to be vulnerable with my self-study data.

I never formally asked him to serve as a Peer Scholar for this project. Instead, he served as my Peer Scholar in an organic manner. He has knowledge of traumatic experiences that I endured during my life, as he asked meaningful questions to understand how my identity intertwines with my research. He is in a position to deliberate with me because he is sensitive to the many types of bullying that I experienced as a child and how this had an impact on my body image. In fact, he was

concerned that this project would bring up all sorts of discomforting experiences from my past. While it has indeed done so, he helps me gain a sense of empowerment as I confront my uneasiness through this project. We often deliberate in person about how this informs my self-study. He engages in pre-conferences with me in person about my scheduled presentations before I leave to present. During the pre-conferences, he asks me several questions about how I would deal with certain predicaments that may arise. In addition, he often asks about the content of the material that I will present on. After the presentation, we deliberate again in person to discuss the presentation and dance. In this way, he causes me to challenge my assumptions and think about the experience.

I do acknowledge that both of my Peer Scholars are white men whom I sincerely trust. This might seem like it endorses a self-fulfilling colonizing legacy in which I seemingly seek the approval of white men. However, this is not the case because I do not automatically label "white" as colonizer and "Indian" as oppressed. My Peer Scholars happen to be white males that I bonded closely with because of our natural relationships that developed over the course of time. Their own background and mine influence the relationship. I strongly feel that these men became my Peer Scholars because I felt a sense of protection from them in the way I feel my brother protects me, as mentioned in the previous chapter. It is very difficult for me to trust an individual enough to make myself vulnerable about very sensitive parts of my life. In the past, some individuals tell me that I should become "frumpy" if I wish to dissuade exotic and erotic attention. In fact, some individuals tell me that I will not be seen as a serious scholar unless I learn to be frumpy. I reject this suggestion because I refuse to deny that I am a part of a

longstanding tradition of Eastern religion and culture. My Peer Scholars never cause me to feel that I should be less than who I am. They seek to understand how my identity intertwines with my ancestry and informs my life's destination to a Supreme Being. Although they are non-Hindus, in my eyes, I see them as Hindu, not ritualistically but rather morally in the sense that they aim to foster interreligious and inter-cultural relations for a humanistic society through our shared interactions.

*Writing Style*

Aside from the research methodology of this project, I consider it necessary to disclose my personal method for my life's existence, which influences the writing style of this text. Since my ultimate goal is to attain moksha (liberation), I aim to build a capacity for moksha every day that I live. Essentially, my life is a preparation for a death that ensures that I will follow a path that leads me to the Supreme Being. Despite the vast amount of negativity it this world, I hope to exude the radiance that the Supreme Being blessed me with to fulfill my life's purpose so that I could, for the lack of a better phrase, finally go home to the Supreme Being. Sometimes, I feel as if my impatient soul bunches into a ball of energy that rises to the top point of my body in an attempt to break through my head, but my thick skull is still too firm. This is a feeling that I had to overcome since, in my case, impatience would not be productive because it would prevent me from fulfilling my life's purpose in the present. I must instead tame the energy in my body as I use every limb to serve the Supreme Being throughout my life through "thought, word, and deed."[135] While some may fear death, I look forward to

fulfilling my life's purpose and dying with contentment, knowing that I will be with a Supreme Being.

My life's destination towards moksha influences my writing style, which is infused with a faith-based Hindu consciousness that intertwines with my epistemological framework. For this reason, I intentionally make some moves in my writing that some may view as inappropriate or controversial. For instance, in the previous chapter I mentioned the precise locations for my childhood residences. While some may see this as unnecessary or inappropriate, my faith-based Hindu consciousness disagrees. My brother always told me that there is a deep significance to the geographical location of a residence. The numbers of a residence add up to form a single digit, which then determines the governing deity of the home.

Because of the deep significance of location, Hindu sacred spaces in homes are set to a certain spot. Hindus pray towards the East during daily prayers to honor Surya, the manifestation of the Supreme Being as the Sun. Any icons, used as a point of concentration of the Supreme Being, often face the West. Hindus do not sleep with their feet facing south. For this reason, my mother always had the beds in our home facing in the East-West direction. Readers with an astrological background may pay close attention to these seemingly minor details to uncover an even deeper analysis.

Also, I acknowledge that I am using the English language to convey this text, but yet the English language lacks the concise terminology to express some of my insights. For this reason, I attempt to cautiously choose English words with an intention to relate my thoughts as concisely as feasible. It is difficult to select appropriate English terms as

I write because of the politics of translation. At the same time though, I attempt to use the appropriate Hindu terms when possible to confront the legacy of colonization that forced the English language upon my ancestors – and by extension myself. For this reason, I intentionally use terms like "pandit" instead of "priest" and "mandir" instead of "church". While English is my primary language that I speak daily, Hindi and Sanskrit is my spiritual language that I use in prayer and through Hindu dance.

Additionally, I intentionally use cultural terms such as the term "bouji", which refers to my "sister-in-law" to whom I do not refer to by name when we speak. I always say "bouji" out of a sincere love coupled with respect. I refuse to give into the term "sister-in-law" because it implies to me that my bouji is only my sister by the powers of the "law". Although my bouji and my brother are happily married, until the end of their lives - and then I'm sure eternally after - my bouji will always be my bouji, regardless of her status with my brother. She is like a mother to me who cares for me deeply as she would her own daughter. How could the term "sister-in-law" do justice to our eternal bond that is beyond the dictation of legal documents that bind her to me through my brother? Yet, I am forced to use the term "sister-in-law" to translate what the term "bouji" means to me. Similarly, my niece and nephews call me "Puwa", which means father's sister. I feel an incredible sense of love when I hear the word "Puwa". My niece and nephews refer to many others as "Aunty" but refer to me as "Puwa". The term "Puwa" has such a long history of the binding love and protection that a brother gives to his sister who then returns it to the brother's children. I will forever love and protect my

niece and nephews with the devotion that my brother will always give to me even after death.

At any rate, I do not use these Hindu terms or cultural terms spitefully to confront the era of colonization that attempted to destroy the language of Hindus. On the contrary, I use these words to teach about Hinduism in an effort to correct the misconceptions of those who forced English onto my ancestors. Each term has a historical significance tied to Hinduism that we should not deny. For this reason, I invite my readers to learn the terminology that I use in an effort to gain a better understanding of who I am as a faith-based Hindu and how my identity influences my methodology for this project.

*Summary*

I essentially aim to find a way to deal with my own postcolonial realities as an educator who seeks to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism and Indian culture. I project to develop a postcolonial educational theory to accomplish this goal. Based on my previous dance experiences, primarily for non-Hindus, as well as my preliminary study of the relevant educational literature, I can make some initial hypotheses that concern possible findings. First, from my own experiences as a dancer-educator, contemplative education practices are a key part of my ability to use dance as a pedagogical tool. Before I used contemplative education practices, I was not able to dance in a manner that fostered my spiritual development. In the future, I believe contemplative education practices will be a crucial part of my ability to serve as an educator who uses dance as a pedagogical tool. Also, my own experiences cause me to realize that I need to move my perception of the seemingly Orientalist gaze of the spectators to an educational gaze that

is aware of postcolonial realities. In my future experiences, I hope to find a way to promote a hybridity among the West and the East that is aware of the postcolonial realities of Hinduism and Indian culture.

Second, through my preliminary study of the relevant literature on dance and contemplative pedagogy, I predict a need for a more robust and clearly defined notion of postcolonial dance pedagogy. My prediction is based on my initial literature review where I pinpointed several gaps. For instance, while contemplative education theory attempts to bridge the gap between the East and the West,[136] my preliminary findings indicate that it fails to take into account the problem of the exotic gaze of Orientalists, and thus, does not address my experience as a dancer. Instead, contemplative education focuses on the development of a secular, pedagogical practice concerned with developing the appropriate critical thinking skills needed to collaborate lovingly in a global society. Arthur Zajonc, physics professor at Amherst College and former director of *The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society*[137] in Northampton, Massachusetts, relates contemplative pedagogy as a secular, transformative pedagogy that aims to help students develop cognition skills that promote critical thinking as students learn to love.

> "We are well-practiced at educating the mind for critical reasoning, critical writing, and critical speaking as well as for scientific and quantitative analysis. But is this sufficient? In a world beset with conflicts, internal as well as external, isn't it of equal if not greater importance to balance the sharpening of our intellects with systematic cultivation of our hearts? We must indeed learn to love. Educators should join with their students to undertake this most difficult task."[138]

To accomplish the task that Zajonc discusses, Tobin Hart[139] develops contemplative exercises for teachers. For example, Hart writes about a wisdom walk, body focusing, concentrated language, and freely writing. Hart provides a detailed

description for the contemplative exercises in a secular manner appropriate for public schools. Similarly, Suhor[140] provides an analysis of contemplative reading as a form of contemplative pedagogy. The most informative piece of literature is *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education A Handbook of Classroom Practices produced by The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society*.[141] The handbook describes, in depth, contemplative pedagogy and contemplative practices in the classroom. The handbook relates mindfulness, meditation, yoga, body-focused practices, deep listening, the value of silence, contemplative writing, contemplative inquiry among other contemplative practices. The contemplative educational practices are for secular, public school classrooms as well as for private schools.

Even though the literature discusses contemplative practices, it is important to address the problem of the exotic gaze that a Hindu dancer encounters when performing for non-Hindus. While the contemplative literature relates theoretical insights, my dissertation will focus on dealing with the problem of the exotic gaze by applying the theoretical insights of contemplative education to Kuchipudi dance. I will use the contemplative literature to build a contemplative, philosophical theory that will move beyond the broad scope of contemplative education and into Kuchipudi dance as a contemplative practice.

As with the literature on Kuchipudi dance and contemplative education, my initial review of the existing literature[142] on dance education indicates that it also fails to take into account my problem as a postcolonial dancer of the Kuchipudi dance tradition. Based on an extensive initial search using the search term *dance* to search the World Cat

database and a meeting with Montclair State University's dance professor, Dr. Elizabeth McPherson, I have found that the dance literature can be grouped into three subsections: creative dance, theatrical dance, and world dance. While each has its merits and insights, each also has certain gaps, which my dissertation will address in order to theorize a postcolonial dance practice capable of interrupting the Orientalizing gaze and opening non-Hindus to a de-colonized understanding of Eastern dance traditions. In other words, creative dance, theatrical dance, and world dance are important parts of dance education that run the risk of Orientalizing and exoticizing divine forms of Indian classical dance.

Creative dancers use movement experientially for expression. While creative dance blends Western and Eastern choreographies, it is essential to do so in a manner that does not offend the sacredness of the divine traditions. A postcolonial educational theory will help creative dancers understand how to engage in Eastern-rooted choreography that is creative, but also remains in fidelity to Eastern traditions. Theatrical dance incorporates music, dance, and theatre on stage as drama. While Western and Eastern choreographers inspire each other, the literature does not discuss the distinctions between Western and Eastern dance, nor does the literature discuss the commonalities between the two. There is a need to show the difference between mere theatrical dance and theatrical dance that has deep religious roots, ethics, and history.

A postcolonial educational dance theory is needed to develop awareness of this difference within theatrical dance. Dance students in colleges and universities are introduced to dances from different religions and cultures in a world dance course.[143] While dance scholars such as Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis develop theories of dance

education during a postcolonial era, there are gaps in the literature. The literature discusses the colonial era and dance education in this current age of postcolonialism, but the literature fails to deal directly with the residual effects of colonialism. A postcolonial educational theory is essential for world dance teachers to apply to prevent Orientalism and exoticism within the classroom. Overall, I will use the dance literature in my dissertation to show why a postcolonial educational theory is needed in the dance education world. I hope to develop a postcolonial theory that acknowledges postcolonial realities as I aim to use Kuchipudi dance as a pedagogical tool against Orientalist representations of Hinduism.

In sum, my projected findings are based on my phenomenological experience, as a postcolonial dancer, my initial literature review of contemplative education, and dance practices. These findings lead me to the following hypotheses that keep in mind the importance of contemplative education for me as an educator and a need for a postcolonial educational theory of dance: a. My perception of the gazes during my dance impacts on my phenomenological experience, which further impacts my ability to apply contemplative education practices to teach. Thus, I aim to move Orientalist and exotic gazes to educational gazes that acknowledge the nature of postcolonial realities. b. The education literature and dance literature does not recognize the postcolonial realities of Indian classical dance. My dissertation will add to the education and dance literature as I will shed light on the postcolonial realities of Indian classical dance. To accomplish this task, I will use a postcolonial theoretical framework and a self-study methodology to

determine how my phenomenological experience develops as I aim to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism and Indian culture.

# Chapter 3

## De-Orientalized Pedagogical Spaces

I use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as a pedagogical tool in a variety of pedagogical spaces. I use the term *pedagogical space* to refer to the teaching and learning environment in which I educate. It is the space where I educate non-Hindus. Education occurs in a variety of learning environments; therefore, a thorough understanding of the pedagogical spaces in which I teach helps me to determine how to structure my pedagogy to teach non-Hindus. I examine the pedagogical tools for particular de-Orientalized pedagogical spaces to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism.

For this purpose, I have turned to the self-study methodology, which is a viable method for this project, because the purpose of self-study is to develop an improved pedagogical practice. Self-study is not a research method that entails mere reflection. On the contrary, self-study researchers[144] aim to challenge their assumptions and confirm their beliefs as they build a knowledge base to help further the learning process.

> "Self-study research fosters an authority of voice by being inclusive of teachers and teacher-educators, by reframing for multiple perspectives rather than re-presenting, and by collaborating rather than colonizing. Since voice in self-study strives to be simultaneously personal and social, it attempts to locate voice in the social, cultural, and political contexts of education."[145]

Self-study researchers need to feel confident enough to trust their perspectives that develop based on their own phenomenology. Voice here is a central concept that is used to share perspectives in a scholarly community. Educators develop their own voice based on a variety of social, religious, cultural, and political contexts. When educators use their voice to share perspectives, they then have the opportunity to reframe their perspectives

as they collaborate with others. In short, educators then become a part of a community that shares with each other and builds on each other's perspectives as opposed to colonizers who attempt to force beliefs upon one another.

Aside from using a voice to build knowledge, it is also important to use a voice to prevent the misappropriation of knowledge. There is a key distinction between misappropriation and colonization. For me, on the one hand, misappropriation occurs when other scholars use my scholarly work in a manner that furthers Orientalism and colonizing agendas. Misappropriation has the potential to develop when there is no use of a pedagogical frame. Now on the other hand, colonization occurs when one forces ideologies onto others, demanding that certain epistemological frameworks develop, which benefit some and exclude others. I am not closed off to scholars who develop other epistemological frameworks that are different from mine. What I am saying is that I will not willingly allow scholars to misappropriate my scholarly work by ignoring my intentions and my epistemological perspective. I use my voice to speak up in a pedagogical space when I feel others may intentionally or unintentionally misappropriate my scholarly work in a manner that furthers Orientalizing and colonizing agendas. With this need to focus on my intentions in mind, I will now turn to explain how the analysis of pedagogical spaces emerged for me as a self-study researcher.

*Emerging of Pedagogical Spaces*

As a doctoral student, I started to present and dance at conferences in relation to my research. My first dance presentation at a conference was for The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) at Amherst College in

Massachusetts.[146] I planned the presentation knowing that the audience would consist of mostly graduate students and professors. I also was aware that I had to limit the presentation to a certain time frame. For this particular conference, I had to plan a presentation for a full half hour, which is usually not the case at conferences. With the time frame in mind, I planned to present my theory for ten minutes, engage in a ten-minute dance piece, and moderate a ten-minute question and answer session. I was very grateful that I had time to dance the full ten-minute dance piece as opposed to shortening it. As I continued to present at conferences, I realized that I had to give very precise presentations and shorten the dance pieces to ensure time for a question and answer session. After my first dance presentation at the ACMHE conference, I went on to present at the Society for the Study of Women Philosophers Group Session at the Eastern Division Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association[147] and the Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion Annual Regional Meeting.[148] I learned how to present and dance at conferences but soon was faced with the task of presenting in a classroom space.

About a year after I started actively presenting and dancing at conferences, I was invited to present in a religion class taught by Lise Vail at Montclair State University. When I presented and danced the *Ramayana* in a classroom setting, I felt uncomfortable with my pedagogical approach.[149] Although the presentation and dance went well, mostly thanks to the support of my friends Sean O'Connor, Silas Dvergastein, and David Gibson who helped me carry luggage and manage the technicalities of the presentation, I still felt that my presentation style was not as manageable and efficient as it could be in a

college classroom setting. There were many factors that were different in a classroom setting compared to a conference setting. As I reflected on this, I realized that I had to consider the background knowledge of the group. The students in the class were reading a shortened version of the *Ramayana*,[150] whereas the people at the conferences may or may not have been familiar with the *Ramayana*. Moreover, the classroom setting was set up for a discussion, while the conferences usually had question and answer sessions. I was also uncomfortable wearing my sacred Kuchipudi costume in both the conference space and the classroom space because there was a great deal of interaction between the viewers and myself. Traditionally, the Kuchipudi dancer who wears the sacred costume must maintain a vegetarian diet and refrain from an alcohol-infused atmosphere. Usually at the conferences, there are often meat dishes and alcohol at the receptions. In both the classroom setting and the conference setting, I have to keep in mind that I cannot expect the viewers to adhere to a Hindu ethic of dance. However, I need to maintain fidelity to who I am as a Hindu dancer. At any rate, I must manage clothing efficiently for the purposes of the presentations. I do not usually have an adequate space to cloth myself in the sacred Kuchipudi costume as I engage in the traditional contemplative practices of Hindu dance. I realized, after a few conferences and classroom presentations, that I should wear a practice dress instead of the traditional Kuchipudi costume.

About a year after I began to present and dance in classroom settings in higher education, I was asked to present and dance at a campus-wide lecture at Montclair State University.[151] I had to think carefully about the appropriate pedagogy for a campus-wide lecture setting. I had to consider many different dynamics compared to a conference

setting and classroom setting. The anticipated number of attendees ranged from fifty to seventy-five people. The presentation was also in a much larger space that required a microphone. I planned to wear the traditional Kuchipudi costume. I had an adequate time frame and a place to get dressed in the Kuchipudi costume while engaging in the traditional contemplative practices as a Hindu dancer.

Soon I felt the need to specifically think about a theatrical space. How could I teach about Hinduism in a space where I was dancing on a stage in a theatrical setting? I could not directly make contact with the viewers of the dance as I could in a classroom setting, conference setting, or lecture setting. After thinking about this for months, I realized that I should develop teaching video clips to teach about the dances. The teaching video clips would play on a projector before each dance. This would give me the necessary time to change costumes when I needed to and serve to directly teach the viewers about the dances. When I engaged in this pedagogical style in a theatrical setting during *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance*[152]at Montclair State University, I felt that the pedagogical method was successful. There were many improvements to make, but I now feel that I have an appropriate pedagogical style to accompany the theatrical setting.

When I reflected on my experiences, I realized that each physical space that I teach in calls for a particular pedagogical style because of the nature of each space. Here, I use the term physical space to refer to the setting that I teach in such as the classroom setting, conference setting, lecture setting, or theatrical setting. With the need to examine the physical spaces in mind, pedagogical spaces became a theme in my self-study journal entries. I began to pay close attention to how I teach in each physical space. After I

grouped all of the entries based on the physical space, I analyzed each space with my Peer Scholars to determine the appropriate pedagogy for each space. We examined the pedagogical commonalities within the spaces, which helped me to develop a theoretical stance that influences my pedagogy in each space. For this reason, when I use the term *pedagogical space* in this chapter, I refer to a particular theoretical stance that I take when I engage in pedagogy while I am in a particular, physical space. It is important to note that the physical space is not explicitly visible in all cases. For example, sometimes I present and dance in a conference space that happens to be in a classroom. Although the space physically appears to be a classroom, the physical space is a conference space and not a classroom space. Sometimes, I dance in a class that meets in a lecture hall style classroom. While the space might appear to be a lecture setting, this is not the case since I am presenting to a class. Thus, the physical space is determined by the various elements of the space. For instance:

Who are the participants?
What prior knowledge do the participants have?
How will I build the background knowledge of the participants?
What is the time frame for the presentation and dance?
Will I have the opportunity to present again to the group?
How does the space I enter into have its own pedagogical orientation, curriculum, and how will my pedagogical stance affect this preexisting pedagogy?
How does the broader postcolonial reality affect the pedagogical space?

As I analyzed the above questions in my initial self-study data, I acknowledged the importance of pedagogical spaces as a common theme across all of my journal entries. One of the first parts of my journal entries includes the location of where I presented and danced. I state the name of the building and room number when possible to shed light on a precise geographical location if feasible. Furthermore, I indicate in my

journals if I presented in a classroom, at a conference, for an invited lecture, or a theatre. This is important to note because the physical space that I teach in directly links to the abstract pedagogical space. The physical space intertwines with the abstract space, which leads me to determine the type of pedagogy that I will engage in. For this reason, I then go on to describe the setup of the space in my journal entries. When I coded my self-study data[153] to organize subthemes for the reoccurring pedagogical space theme, I realized that I struggled to develop an appropriate pedagogy for distinct pedagogical spaces in which I often teach. For instance, I grappled with what the appropriate pedagogy was for the classroom setting, conference setting, lecture setting, and theatrical setting since each space was very unique.

The politics of space is a central issue in the contemporary educational literature. Maggi Savin-Baden[154] focuses on the issue of learning spaces as an absent part of academia that causes the fragmentation of academic identities. Savin-Baden problematizes the issue of learning spaces.

> "1. Learning spaces are increasingly absent in academic life. 2. The creation and re-creation of learning spaces is vital for the survival of the academic community. 3. The absence of learning spaces is resulting in increasing dissolution and fragmentation of academic identities. 4. Learning spaces need to be valued and possibly redefined in order to regain and maintain the intellectual health of academe."[155]

Savin-Baden indicates that academia lacks learning spaces that are essential to the survival of the academy. Without learning spaces, academic identities become fragmented. To prevent this, Savin-Baden proposes redefined learning spaces that contribute to the intellectual health of those within the academy. Mike Keppell and Matthew Riddle elaborate further.

> "Higher education institutions are no longer defined by the physical boundaries of their campus but by the entire student experience, whether that involves negotiating the physical corridors of the campus, attending face-to-face classes, participating in fully online courses or a blend of both fact-to-face and online courses. In addition to the formal institutional physical and virtual spaces utilised by staff and students, the informal physical and virtual spaces may now encompass a wider range of distributed learning spaces."[156]

Students do not learn solely when in the physical boundaries of higher education, but rather learn throughout the entire student experience. Educators should acknowledge the need for student activities outside of the classroom that promotes teaching and learning. As an educator, I place myself in a pedagogical space that aims to create a learning space for learners whether in a classroom or another setting.

> "Creating learning spaces means re-engagement with our understandings and presuppositions of what counts as knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy. However, the creating of learning spaces also requires that we locate or review learning spaces and our identities within them."[157]

According to Savin-Baden, educators create learning spaces when they determine what their pedagogical stance is. Savin-Baden calls on educators to understand their identities when they locate themselves within a learning space. I use the term *pedagogical space* to describe the space in which I come to understand how my academic identity causes me to locate myself within the learning space in which I teach. I focus on the pedagogical space because it is the space that shapes my pedagogical practices as an educator. It is a space where I reflect on how to teach, what to teach, and the meaningful physical space in which I teach.

> "Any space could become meaningful to people, as is shown by the customs of erecting shrines at the sites of fatal car crashes or of making pilgrimages to farmlands which were once battlegrounds. Unless learning spaces take on at least some of the emotional aspects of potential space, it is hard to imagine that anyone could or would want to learn."[158]

As Sellers and Souter claim, any space becomes a learning space if an individual learns. Similarly, a space may become a pedagogical space if an educator teaches in a learning space. Educators may educate in classrooms, but also may educate outdoors or in unconventional settings. Regardless of the setting, Sellers and Souter implicitly point to the emotional component of learning spaces, which involves the intent to learn. According to Sellers and Souter, there needs to be a desire to learn. This desire to learn helps to create a learning space. Likewise, an educator needs to have a desire to educate. Then, the educator should think about how to maintain a position in a pedagogical space that is a part of the learning space.

Merilyn Childs and Regine Wagner relate the notion of viral learning spaces, which builds on Sellers and Souter's claim regarding the presence of an intention to learn.

> "Viral Learning Spaces: Those designed outside the institution, by people who probably do not call themselves 'students' or 'learners' at the time of the activity, engaged in learning in and through the world. In Viral Learning Spaces, learning is contagious rather than contained; spreadable and self-directed; networked and uncontrollable (in similar view to viral marketing)."[159]

Childs and Wagner indicate that some individuals may not be aware of their presence in a learning space that they created. In this instance, there is presence of an intention to learn, but this intention goes unnoticed. Childs and Wagner believe this type of teaching and learning is contagious as it spreads uncontrollably through a network. Each individual takes the initiative to learn, which indicates some sort of intent, but these individuals are unaware that they have this intention. Nevertheless, there is some sort of intent to learn.

While the educational literature focuses on learning spaces where academic learning occurs, I emphasize my role as an educator in the pedagogical space in which I teach. The space for me is both a learning space and a pedagogical space simultaneously because this is the space where I teach and learn. Savin-Baden states,

> "The concept of learning spaces expresses the idea that there are diverse forms of space within the life and life world of the academic where opportunities to reflect and analyse their own learning position occur."[160]

A learning space is a space where academics have the opportunity to reflect through analysis of their learning. As I reflect on my learning position, I also think about my teaching position, which occurs in a variety of spaces. For this reason, I use the term *pedagogical space*, instead of learning space, to describe the link between teaching and learning for me as an educator who moves forward on an educational journey. Elizabeth Ellsworth's[161] concept of *pivot places* provide insight on how pedagogical spaces have the ability to turn educators in new directions.

My pedagogical practices are framed by the presence of a postcolonial reality that is intertwined with my self-study. The pedagogical spaces that I describe are never divorced from the larger social, political, and economic spaces. For this reason, I use Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Ashis Nandy to understand three particular postcolonial pedagogical spaces in which I teach. After I analyzed a series of journal entries in my self-study with my Peer Scholars, I realized that these theoretical postcolonial pedagogical spaces are intertwined into the physical space. In this chapter, I relate why the following de-Orientalized pedagogical spaces that develop through my self-study are particularly important for me: 1.) Overlapping Pedagogical Space, influenced by Edward

Said 2.) Pedagogical Space of Hybridity, influenced by Homi Bhabha 3.) Pedagogical Space of Mirroring, influenced by Ashis Nandy. This is essentially a postcolonial map of pedagogical spaces. The concept of mapping played an important role in colonizing. Thus, I feel the need to develop a postcolonial map of pedagogical spaces with decolonization in mind. At any rate, I do not claim that I teach in only one of these pedagogical spaces at a time. I teach in primarily one of these pedagogical spaces when I educate non-Hindus, but yet, the other two spaces have the ability to be present in my primary pedagogical space.

Edward Said[162] provided a point of departure for postcolonial scholars. He indicates that the East and the West overlap. I consider it necessary to point out what Said refers to when he uses the terms "West" and "East". Said states in the Preface of *Orientalism*,

> "I emphasize in it accordingly that neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other. That these supreme fictions lend themselves easily to manipulation and the organization of collective passion has never been more evident than in our time, when the mobilizations of fear, hatred, disgust, and resurgent self-pride and arrogance – much of it having to do with Islam and the Arabs on one side, 'we' Westerners on the other – are very large-scale enterprises."[163]

Said does not mean the geographical boundaries that divide the globe into the Western and Eastern hemispheres. The Occident "West" and the Orient "East" are created fictions that are based on an "us" vs. "them" notion between the colonizers and the colonized. The "West" and the "East" are not ontologically stable because it is based on the social constructions of society. Essentially, Said uses the terms "West" and "East" in *Orientalism*[164] to describe the Western Eurocentric prejudices that imperialized

particularly Arabic-Islamic culture. Similarly, throughout the history of postcolonial studies, scholars use the terms "West" and "East" to refer to the Western Eurocentric prejudices that colonized Eastern cultures during imperialism. Another common metaphor in postcolonialism is the "North" and "South" metaphor.[165] The "North" is symbolic of the Eurocentric, patriarchal imperial power that colonized the Southern, feminine cultures during imperialism.

Through an analysis of my initial self-study data, I realize that I primarily need to focus on de-Orientalizing misconceptions of Hinduism when I am in this pedagogical space where the East and the West overlap. I am often in a classroom setting when this occurs. Overall, my self-study journal entries show that I use this pedagogical space, while in the classroom setting, to confront Orientalism that arises in readings assigned to students. For example, many textbooks refer to Hinduism as a polytheistic, pagan religion when this is not the case. When I encounter this in readings assigned to students, I develop a worksheet with quotations from the primary Hindu scriptures, which show that Hinduism is a monotheistic religion. The main goal in this space is to provide an understanding of a Hindu epistemological framework as I de-Orientalize misrepresentations of Hinduism that lead to the development of misconceptions.

To continue, I think of Said's method as a Venn diagram with the East in one sphere, the West in another sphere, and an overlapping space in the middle where I serve as an educator. This overlapping space is a crucial space where scholars should aim to represent religion and culture as opposed to engage in a misrepresentation through a false creation of Orientalized knowledge based on uncontestable truths. With this concern in

mind, I often feel as if I must maintain a unique type of calmness similar to the ocean's soothing waves that roll in at sunrise or sunset.

Regardless of how a dialogue in this space may become confrontational because of controversy, I must remember that I cannot act as roaring waves that destroy the shoreline causing damage through flooding. Instead, I must respond as the soothing waves do when they touch the shoreline in an attempt to share that I am as a faith-based Hindu. If I use phrases such as "We as Hindus," then I may unintentionally endorse the "us vs. them" mentality. My goal in this space is not to create sharp distinctions that permanently separate the West and the East. Rather my goal here is to show the distinct features of the West and the East but also show the overlapping space of commonality where I am positioned as a self-study researcher.

Building on Said's coined term *Orientalism*, postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha[166] develops the term hybridity, which deals with the conjoining of cultures because of diasporic movements. Bhabha indicates that the boundaries of the East and the West are illusory. Religions and cultures are not neatly compartmentalized into undisputed spheres but rather constantly endure transformation because of a never-ending movement that occurs across illusory boundaries. For Bhabha, we need to break through the illusory boundaries and join our histories in a space of hybridity. While Said urges me to think in terms of Venn diagrams, Bhabha helps me to refine my thought. Bhabha urges me to move past the illusory overlapping space of the Venn diagram. Here, I think of an Eastern sphere and a Western sphere that is joined together in the space of hybridity.

Through an analysis of my initial self-study journals, I realized that I use the pedagogical space of hybridity to further build my theoretical framework. This often occurs as I engage in a dialogical discussion as a co-inquirer with the viewers of the dance. Sometimes, I enter this pedagogical space while I am in the physical space of a classroom or at a conference. I started to think deeply about this pedagogical space when I presented and danced for the third annual conference of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education at Amherst College.[167] This was an unusual conference presentation in the sense that there was not a question and answer session to accompany my presentation. Instead, there was an intense, theoretical group discussion about my postcolonial theory. The viewers, who were almost all professors in universities, helped me to develop my theoretical stance during a discussion. As I continued to present and dance in a variety of settings, I realized the importance of the pedagogical space of hybridity that allows me to think about developing something *new*.

In this space of hybridity, interreligious dialogue and cultural contact is essential to understand the nature of religion and culture in a manner that does not engage in the dangerous misrepresentation that occurs based on Orientalist interpretations. To this extent through my self-study, I acknowledge that I frequently feel the need to protect myself in this space. It is as if I am in a rainforest where there are many possible predators that could destroy me but also there are possibilities for harmonious growth because of the wonders of the environment. Just as a parent ideally protects a child, I must safeguard myself in this space from predators who may aim to destroy my identity as a faith-based Hindu. At the same time, it is imperative to interconnect with all around

me to develop something new that fosters a genuine appreciation coupled with respect for different epistemological frameworks.

Aside from postcolonial scholars who use Said's method as a point of departure, intellectuals such as Ashis Nandy[168] employ a postcolonial theoretical framework that places in perspective Said's work and the work of those who follow. Nandy's method[169] is tricky because he admits that he will write about a concept without mentioning the name of the concept about which he is talking. For example, he may write about poverty without even mentioning poverty. Nandy indicates in the introduction of *Time Warps*[170] that his method deals with mirroring. He also moves from the micro to the macro as he connects the local to the global through the personal and the collective.

When I first encountered Nandy's work, I began to think about my past solo theatrical performances. At that point in my scholarship, I do not feel that I directly taught the viewers about Hinduism although I did attempt this in a theatrical setting. Through Nandy's work, I realized that the physical theatrical space is a pedagogical space of mirroring. Thus, I had to find a way to teach the viewers in an indirect but yet direct manner. After thinking for months about this, I came to the conclusion that prerecorded teaching visual clips would be a direct way to teach the viewers in a theatrical setting. Yet, this is also indirect because I am featured in a visual recording as opposed to providing the teaching clip live and in person.

The Venn diagram of Said and the hybridity that includes the joining space of the spheres of Bhabha is broken into two separate spheres that mirror each other in Nandy's work. The East mirrors the West and vice versa. Through my self-study, I realize that I

often feel as if I am in a heavenly abode where an ambrosial fragrance fills the span of an endless space as celestial beings surround me with blessings that seem to pour onto me the way the gentle summer rain cools the parched grass. Although it seems that I am in one mirror and the viewers are in another, this is an illusionary image. Even if we think religion and culture are compartmentalized into neat spheres, the messiness of global politics is always present not just *within* each separate sphere but also *among and between* these spheres. This is precisely how Nandy's mirroring connects to Said's overlapping and Bhabha's joining as a method of social transformation in postcolonial studies. Said and Bhabha among other postcolonial scholars move in the direction of dealing with the messiness of global politics with the goal of social transformation. For this purpose, I will now turn to discuss my role as an educator in each of these pedagogical spaces to show how postcolonialism frames my pedagogical practices that are aware of the social, political, and economic contexts.

As I continue, it is important to note that the physical spaces are not divorced from the abstract theoretical spaces. When I plan a dance presentation, first I think of the setting that I will present in as opposed to the actual, physical room. For instance, will I present to a class, for a campus-wide lecture, at a conference, or for a theatrical? Once I know the space that I will present in, I think about the appropriate pedagogy for that space. If possible, I attempt to gain information on the physical space of the venue. All of these elements intertwine as I think about the pedagogical space that I will teach in.

*Overlapping Space: Edward Said*

With a specific account of Orientalism as a critical problem in mind, Said describes how the West develops Orientalist texts that reduce the East to a mere fantasy world that exists to fulfill Western expectations and ideals of the East. Said refers to Orientalism as he indicates that the East and the West overlap in a very particular manner.

> "It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological tests; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, the Orient and Occident) but also a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with the orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do)."[171]

Said distinguishes several ideas in the above quote, which points to his critical problem. Essentially, Said describes the Orientalist interpretation of Eastern texts. There is an *intention* to understand, albeit sometimes for manipulative purposes, what is different. From this *intention*, knowledge is *produced* and *elaborated* on. Said uses the terms *intention*, *produced*, and *elaborated* on to indicate that Orientalism thrives based on the relationship between power and the development of knowledge. Said's usage of the terms *produced and exists* in the above quote lead me to determine that both power and

knowledge cause Orientalism to first *develop* (produced) and then continue to *develop* (exists) by providing something for other Orientalists to *inherit*. Consequently, Orientalism develops, is inherited, and continues to thrive regardless of whether or not an intention is present to understand the East. In other words, once Orientalized texts are canonized, these texts no longer refer to the East but rather refer to the mythical, exoticized fantasy of the East. This distinctly Western construction of the East is essentially Said's critical problem that prompts me as an educator to think about how I teach in pedagogical spaces.

My problem is that Orientalism thrives in the West because of misrepresentations of the East that further Orientalist agendas. Our society inhabits a postcolonial space that has Orientalist views of the East because of the way the West constructs knowledge of the East. I teach in a postcolonial space where I am forced to confront Orientalism that I must directly deal with. If I ignore Orientalist ideologies, then I unintentionally further Orientalist agendas. My purpose as an educator is to disrupt the effects of Orientalism as I aim to provide a de-Orientalized version of the East.

As I think about how I teach in particular pedagogical spaces, I return to Said for not just an understanding of the critical problem of Orientalism, but also for a possible solution. Said writes,

> "My principal aim is not to separate but to connect, and I am interested in this for the main philosophical and methodological reason that cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure, and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality."[172]

Said's solution to the critical problem of Orientalism is to connect the East and the West in a space that acknowledges the "hybrid, mixed, impure" element of the East and the

West. In this overlapping space of connection, there is a need to acknowledge the actual histories of the East and the West. The comprehension of the de-Orientalized histories, as opposed to the Orientalized histories, provide a space to engage in an analysis that aims to create a space where the East can disrupt the Orientalized view of the East that the West maintains. Thus, for Said, the solution is essentially a *de-Orientalization* of Orientalization. I use the term de-Orientalization to refer to the ability to return back to an analysis of the representative histories of the East and the West instead of an analysis that focuses on false, developed, misinformed knowledge – a knowledge that develops based on a misrepresented construction of the East and the West.

Keep in mind that I make a distinction between de-Orientalization and de-colonization. Here, I would like to distinguish between these two terms since they often are conflated. As stated earlier, de-Orientalization focuses on an analysis of the East and the West based on the actual histories of the East and the West as opposed to Orientalized histories. This deals with the abstract since there is a focus on the way histories are told, developed, and re-explained. De-colonization involves an attempt to deal with the effects of colonization in a manner that aims to return to the ideals of religion and culture without colonialist missions. For example, India engaged in de-colonization once India gained independence from British rule. There was an attempt to free the nation of colonialist missions of Britain and return back to Indian ideals. While de-Orientalization could be an effect of colonization, I make a distinction between de-Orientalizing and de-colonizing just as there is a distinction between Orientalism and colonization. Yet, it is

also important to remember, that there also is an overlap between Orientalism and colonization since the two often work together.

Nevertheless, educators have the ability to use power to foster the development of de-Orientalized knowledge instead of using power to maintain an "us" vs. "them" mentality. For me, this overlapping space that Said relates is a crucial pedagogical space where educators should use their power to represent religion and culture as opposed to engaging in a misrepresentation through a false creation of Orientalized knowledge based on uncontestable truths. Said hints that the solution to the problem of Orientalism occurs in a pedagogical space that aims to de-Orientalize.

While in an overlapping pedagogical space, my goal is to help non-Hindus develop de-Orientalized knowledge and epistemological frameworks of Hinduism and Indian culture. It is important to note that this development of knowledge and epistemological frameworks occur in an overlapping pedagogical space. A dialogical discussion may occur to help Westerners and Easterners to understand a de-Orientalized representation of the West and the East. For example, when I visited a *Comparative Religions* class taught by Alfonse Borysewicz at New Jersey City University, the students and I engaged in a dialogical discussion about the distinctions between intuition, knowledge, and intelligence in an effort to understand Western and Eastern epistemological frameworks that inevitably intertwine.[173] The discussion topic emerged from my Kuchipudi dance presentation about the meditative third eye of Shivaji.

Savin-Baden relates the importance of a dialogic learning space for learners.

> "Dialogic spaces also include Socratic dialogue. Socrates believed that knowledge was unattainable and thus used dialogue and questioning approaches

> to probe student understanding of moral concepts such as justice, and applied formal logic to their ideas to show inconsistencies, inadequacies and weaknesses of their beliefs. 'The Socratic Method' was developed by Nelson in the 1920s. Its objective was to use collective reflection and introspection."[174]

While some may view The Socratic Method as a badgering, combative form of inquiry, The Socratic Method is a key component of my facilitation of an empathetic, collaborative, dialogical discussion. As I engage in a dialogical discussion, I acknowledge that I do not have all of the answers to questions. I share my phenomenological perspective with learners but also challenge my own perspectives within a dialogical discussion. Essentially though in this pedagogical space, I use my own phenomenology, as a Kuchipudi dancer and educator within the West, as a pedagogical tool to educate. In the abovementioned classroom presentation, I used The Socratic Method to engage as a co-inquirer in a class discussion.

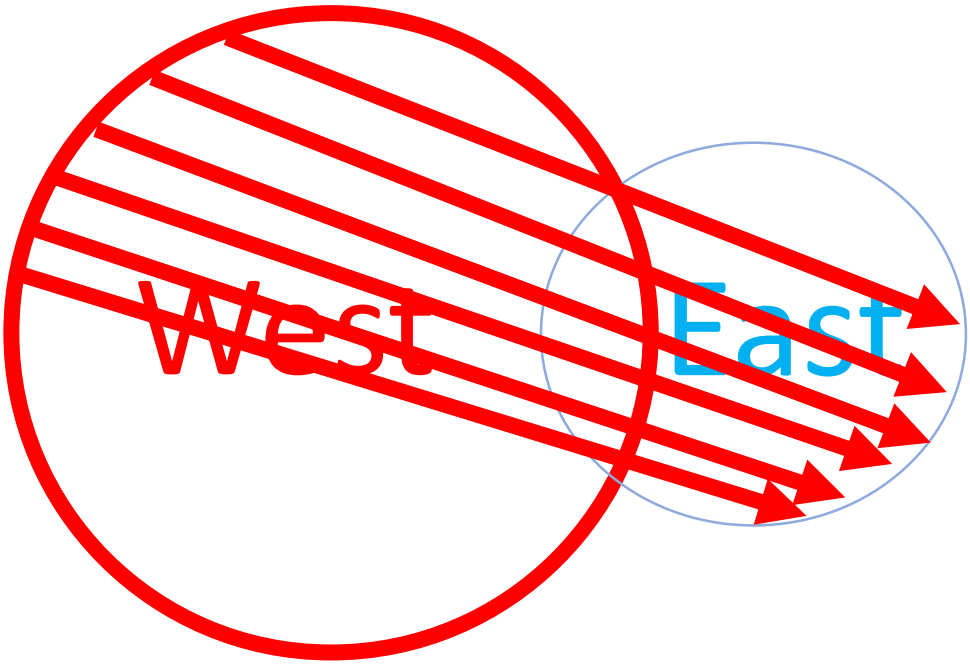
> "I explained to the class that I hope to engage in a discussion as opposed to a Question and Answer session, which would occur at a lecture. I answered some initial questions, but then I facilitated a discussion. I asked the class which part of the dance caught their attention the most. One fellow said that there is so much to absorb, but he said the third eye caught his attention the most. I asked what he understood about the third eye. He said he realizes it is a metaphor for the way we use our intelligence to destroy lust, ego, arrogance, and other evil qualities. I then asked the class where does this evil exist. We agreed there could be evil inside and outside of us. I asked the class how do we know when something is lustful and when it's not. In other words, how do we recognize lust and then move onto destroy it? The class first said experience. I asked how can we trust our experience. They said it was based on feelings. I asked if we should always trust our feelings. They said that there are feelings but then there is what is rational which should determine what feelings we should have. In other words, we should control our feelings rationally. Once we have gained clarity through a rational reasoning, then we will know what internal and external evils are and then we will be equipped to destroy it. Alfonse asked if consciousness and intelligence is the same. We did not have more time to press the discussion. I thanked the class for thinking through this topic with me."[175]

I also use history as a pedagogical tool. In the overlapping pedagogical space, it is important to use facts presented as history to develop knowledge. However, it is imperative to unveil the hidden power dynamics that are involved in what counts as "official" history. If the facts are not revealed from concealed Orientalist sources, then it is crucial to think about how the historical ideas have developed to contribute to Orientalist knowledge. Then, it is essential to de-Orientalize the Orientalist knowledge. My goal is not to assume absolute authority as an educator. However, when power is used appropriately, is not necessarily a negative quality but rather has a purpose that helps to foster philosophical, epistemological development. Essentially, I wish to use my power as an educator to help non-Hindus understand Hinduism in a de-Orientalized manner that does not attempt to create some sort of absolutism.

To accomplish these goals, I use the primary Hindu scriptures themselves to find descriptions that complicate exoticized misinterpretations of Hinduism and Indian culture. For instance, when I dance the *Ramayana* for viewers, who in many cases, are assigned to read the *Ramayana* as a part of university classes, I often bring my large version of the *Ramayana*[176] wrapped in a sacred red cloth with me. Here, I hope to press the point that the short version of the *Ramayana* that is often assigned in university classes does not do justice to the depths of the sacred scripture. In fact, my version of the *Ramayana* is only a glimpse into the great historical epic. To further show this, I share that there are many volumes of the sacred, primary version studied by Hindus. The primary scripture of the *Ramayana* complicates the exoticized versions that some students may read in university classes.

I also use the self-study methodology to help me pay close attention to phenomenological experience as a Hindu dancer who aims to represent Hinduism during the teaching and learning process. As I engage in a self-study methodology, I maintain a crucial awareness of the overlapping pedagogical space in which I teach. As noted earlier, in this pedagogical space, I think of Said's method as a Venn diagram with the East in one sphere, the West in another sphere, and an overlapping space in the middle where education occurs. While thinking of Said's theory in terms of Venn diagrams has proved to be useful for my comprehension, these diagrams are not an absolute conveyance of Said's theory of Orientalism. This is because the East and the West are not static, but rather under constant change. Nevertheless, the following Venn diagrams demonstrate how knowledge develops based on power. I choose to portray the West in a larger circle because, throughout the modern era in world history, the West has been viewed as superior compared to the East. The East is viewed as a smaller entity by historians and sometimes even completely ignored by scholars who focus solely on a Western perspective. In an Eastern world, where the East is viewed as a larger entity by historians and scholars who may even ignore the West, then a larger circle is appropriate to portray the East. However, for the purposes of this project, it is more appropriate to portray the West as a larger entity since the West is viewed as a dominant world-view compared to the East.

DIAGRAM 1 – This Venn diagram depicts the West with a big circle and the East with a smaller overlapping circle. This shows that the West dominates the East due to a long history of colonialism and Orientalist ideologies. The arrows show how the West uses power forcefully with confidence to educate the East in a manner that fosters an Orientalist development of knowledge based on false histories. This digs a deeper hole of Orientalist ideologies.




In this diagram, the overlapping space is where I find myself positioned as an educator. The philosophical discussion that occurs is based on Western ideals that are used to judge the East. According to Said, the West develops Orientalist knowledge even though Westerners rarely travel to the East or engage in religious or cultural contact with the East. Instead, the West uncritically comments on Orientalist texts, which the West believes to be a true representation of the East. The West uses power to civilize the East based on Western ideals. Easterners themselves start to believe that Western values are

universal. The East succumbs to the West and joins the West in an endeavor to civilize the East based on Western world-views. In this scenario, educators misuse power to manipulate the discussion to serve the West. Easterners, who trust Westerners, in the case, are vulnerable to Orientalist knowledge development.

It is imperative for me to shield myself from this vulnerability, which may cause me to fall prey to Orientalists with intentional or unintentional colonizing agendas. In this overlapping pedagogical space, first I use the self-study methodology to pay very close attention to my own phenomenology. It is crucial for me to remain self-aware but also open to inquiry. Second, instead of insisting on an absolute perspective of Hinduism, I use philosophy to theorize deeply about questions posed by students and teachers. Bullough, Jr. and Pinnegar[177] state,

> "As self-study researchers, do we consider seriously enough the ways in which taking risks and being vulnerable exposes our students, and possibly theirs, to unscrupulous or inappropriate teaching where students are asked to set aside concern for their own learning to support the learning of the teacher? More than the vulnerability of teacher educators in self-study, emotional strength and humility and the ability to respond in the heat of the moment in ways that are morally appropriate and supportive of students are bigger issues. In doing self-study research, we may create a new space and reality for teaching and learning. When we create new spaces and new realities, we create new terrain for moral obligation and responsibility."

Educators take risks when they expose themselves personally because it places these educators in a vulnerable position with the students. This might seem risky since many students and faculty might label this as inappropriate or ineffective pedagogy. However, teaching and learning is a process that occurs between both teachers and students. Teachers teach students, but students may also teach teachers. Nevertheless, the teacher facilitates the discussion, which means that the teacher needs to be able to respond with

"emotional strength and humility"[178] even when the teacher is in a vulnerable position. To press this point, I will share parts of my journal entry for a classroom dance presentation.

> "I was in a very vulnerable position when I presented and danced on April 12, 2012 for RS 0010 *Introduction to Religious Studies* taught by Michael Canaris at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut.[179] I started to casually introduce myself to the students as they floated into the classroom. I felt very safe, but yet I did not know what to expect from the people that I met. Would they try to colonize me into conforming to Catholicism? Would they genuinely appreciate me as a Hindu dancer? Would they try to impose an imaginary, fictionalized version of Hinduism onto me? Although the campus seemed very spiritual, I did not want to assume that this meant that I would naturally be accepted for who I am as a Hindu."[180]

Here, I exposed myself vulnerably to a religious studies university class at a Catholic university. I took a risk by venturing into the unknown to provide a dance presentation where my body was both subject and object since my body is my pedagogical tool that I use to dance. I felt comfortable taking this risk because I trust my colleague Michael Canaris, a Catholic theologian who maintains a humanistic approach to religious studies. The reassuring sense of trust between my colleague and I played a vital role in my ability to enter this space.

> "The students were using a text by Livingston entitled *Anatomy of the Sacred*.[181] First, I refuted the Orientalist parts of Livingston's text that discussed Hinduism. I stated Livingston's claims and then used the Hindu scriptures to agree, disagree, or build on what he proposed. Second, I presented on the contemplative nature of Shiva, a Hindu deity. Following this, I performed a Shiva Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. I felt appreciated, respected, and valued because I sensed a sacred gaze from the viewers. Third, I engaged in a philosophical discussion with the students.
>
> Throughout the presentation, I felt religiously compelled as a Hindu to point to parts of the Livingston text. On page 5 of the 6th edition, Livingston indicates that Hinduism is a polytheistic religion. When western scholars studied Asian religions, they unintentionally misinterpreted some parts of Asian religions. To the observer's eye, Hinduism does have a variety of Gods and Goddesses,

> which on the surface seems to fit the definition of polytheism. However, these Gods and Goddesses stem from One God. Thus, underneath the surface from a critical observer's eye, Hinduism is a monotheistic religion. I shared several verses from several Hindu scriptures to press the point that Hinduism believes there is One God. Nevertheless, the problem is that Western scholars who unintentionally misinterpret Hinduism write down their misinterpretations, which are then cited by other scholars. This creates as fictionalized version of Hinduism as the hole gets deeper and deeper. For instance, when students write papers they may cite the Livingston book that seems to develop an imagined version of Hinduism. To correct the misinterpretation of the scholars, it is imperative to go back to the Hindu scriptures themselves."[182]

I had a pedagogical plan to de-Orientalize misrepresentations of Hinduism that were portrayed in the text. For me, it is helpful to develop a pedagogical plan that coordinates with the material that the students study. This is how I feel I am most helpful in the pedagogical space of the classroom. It gives me the opportunity to read the readings in an effort to confront Orientalism. I explained the term "Orientalism" and how the West developed misconceptions of Hinduism by merely observing Hindus without studying deeply into Hindu scriptures. I told the students that if they would like an informative education on Hinduism, then they need to study from the primary Hindu sources rather than secondary Orientalized sources that cause false knowledge development of Hinduism. The pedagogical plan was an essential component of the classroom presentation where I engaged in de-Orientalizing Hinduism. I had to show how the Western text misrepresented Hinduism as I confronted the text through the usage of primary Hindu sources. Although I focused on the primary Hindu sources to build my case for Hinduism as a monistic religion, there was a student who did not agree.

> "Throughout the discussion, one particular student said he did not agree with Hinduism as monotheistic or monist despite my presentation of the Hindu scriptures to support my claim. Although I had a smile on my face, I felt my body become quite tense, as I feared this student would try to convince me that

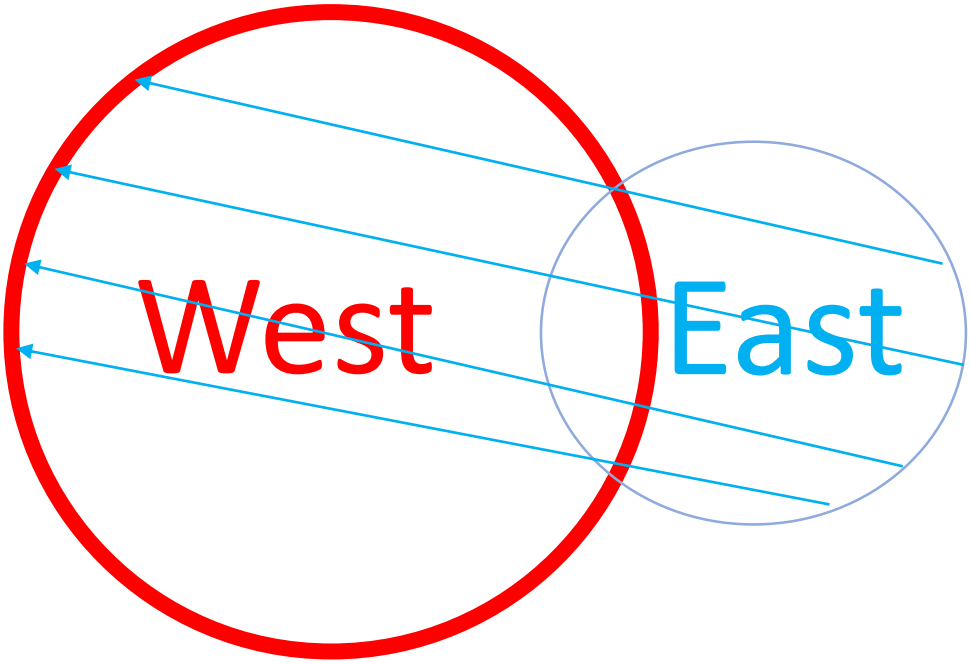
> Hinduism is a pagan religion. The college-aged student who responded to me was a young, white, confident male. My fear was that this white male was going to try to teach me about what my own actuality, as a Hindu should be. In other words, it seemed as if he was trying to have me understand why Hinduism is polytheistic and correct my own interpretation. He was successful in the sense that I do understand why the West views Hinduism as polytheistic. If we agree that praying to more than one God defines a religion as polytheistic, then it would seem that Hinduism is (what I don't believe it is) polytheistic. However, is this what polytheistic means? Is this a simple case of monotheistic or polytheistic? If ultimately, Hindus pray to one God in different forms, but yet still One God, then isn't this a monotheistic religion?
>
> During the discussion, I felt that I was able to maintain a postcolonial position. Even though I used quotes from Hindu scriptures to depict Hinduism as monotheistic, this student did not agree. I told him that as long as he could build and support his claim with Hindu scriptural evidence and not Orientalized evidence, he may convince me. As I remained self-aware, but yet open to philosophical inquiry, I felt that I was able to facilitate the discussion without becoming upset that a particular student did not agree with my de-Orientalized interpretation. I appreciated that the student listened to me, thought carefully, and contributed to the discussion. The student's contribution to the discussion helped me to understand why many Westerners and perhaps even Easterners consider Hinduism a polytheistic religion. While I don't agree with this interpretation because it does not go deeply enough into analysis and also relies on contrasting Western views of monotheism, I do appreciate the analysis. Moreover, I realized how crucial teaching and learning in a de-Orientalized manner is in education. Even though I learned from this particular student, I was careful to not develop an imagined, fictionalized interpretation of Hinduism that does not match my actuality as a Hindu."[183]

The most vital element here is my ability to engage as a co-inquirer in the dialogue in an effort to reason together with the class. I presented my philosophical argument to the class to show how the Hindu scriptures help me to develop premises that lead to the conclusion that Hinduism is a monotheistic religion. However, one particular student offered a different argument as he also used the Hindu scriptures to develop his premises that led him to his own conclusion about the metaphysics of Hinduism. Here, I do not aim to become confrontational to prove that my way of thinking is correct. On the contrary, I understand the differing philosophical arguments that some may offer. The

main point here is that there is a need to participate in a dialogue where the participants aim to agree, disagree, and/or build philosophical arguments together. The dialogical environment needs to be a safe space for all participants who should share freely without fear of being attacked for their reasoning. If I had the opportunity to continue the dialogue, then the students and I probably would have continued to examine this topic in an effort to develop a better understanding together as a class.

Nevertheless, there is not just the issue of me, as the educator, falling prey to Orientalists to consider. Another crucial issue involves the possibility that I may unintentionally Orientalize and colonize the West by imposing Eastern religious and cultural ideals. To prevent this unnerving pedagogy from developing, I share diagram two, which relates another dangerous overlapping pedagogical space.

DIAGRAM 2 – This Venn diagram depicts the West with a big circle and the East with a smaller overlapping circle. This shows that the West dominates the East due to a long history of colonialism and Orientalist ideologies. The arrows show how the East uses power in a seemingly passive way to educate the West in a manner that fosters an Orientalist development of knowledge based on false histories.




In diagram two, the overlapping space continues to be a space where Orientalist knowledge develops. The philosophical discussion that occurs is based on Eastern ideals that are used to judge the West. The East misuses power with an attempt to change Western ideals to Eastern ideals. Westerners start to believe that Eastern ideals are universal. Westerners start to practice Eastern religion and culture. In this instance, Westerners who trust Easterners are vulnerable to the Orientalist knowledge development of the East. This is what I personally do not want to do as an educator. I do not aim to impose Eastern ideals on the West.

I often would meet colleagues who would ask me to share my experiences as a faith-based Hindu who attends "kirtan" (Hindu singing sessions). Particularly, I met many colleagues at a reception at Amherst College during The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society's Annual Conference[184] during Fall 2011 who asked me about my experiences. Although I welcome the opportunity to share who I am as a faith-based Hindu, I wondered why my newfound colleagues, who just met me, seem to place such an emphasis of trust in my experiences without knowing me as a scholar. I sensed that they trusted me because they would not pose any philosophical questions of inquiry but rather looked for me to give answers about my experiences with a glance of trust gleaming from their eyes.

I do not sense that they were just being polite because they viewed me as a frail young female graduate student. On the contrary, the gleam from their eyes seemed to see me as a strong intellectual scholar whose graduate studies are unique. What if I were an Orientalist who misrepresented Hinduism? Why did my colleagues trust me as much as they did? These questions that focus on my colleagues' phenomenological experiences are not the focus of this project. My point is that my colleagues, who just met me, trusted me to share in a dangerous manner where I had the opportunity to impose a faith-based Hindu epistemological framework onto them, which is not my goal. It seemed as if they would trust me regardless of what I shared with them. This unfortunately paves the way for Orientalism to thrive in this overlapping pedagogical space.

The self-study methodology reminds me to remain self-aware of my personal dimension as an educator. As an individual of Eastern descent raised in the West, I

acknowledge that I am both Eastern and Western simultaneously. Therefore, I pay close attention to my phenomenological experiences, as both an Easterner and Westerner, as I attempt to further understand the East and the West through a de-Orientalized knowledge base. Loughran[185] relates the importance of teachers and students in the learning process.

> "Personal aspects of self are played out against the academic need for explication of, and knowledge about, effective practice in ways that illustrate the importance to the pedagogue of being better informed about teaching. Therefore, self-study as teaching is embodied in approaches to pedagogy whereby one's own taken-for-granted assumptions about practice need to be made explicit so that meaningful questioning of practice might be encouraged."

As Loughran indicates, it is important for educators to remember that they do not need to maintain an absolute position as all encompassing knowers. Educators have the opportunity to challenge their own taken-for-granted assumptions during a philosophical discussion. This will help educators improve their own pedagogy for teaching and learning. However, I am positioned as an educator in a postcolonial world that still heavily favors Western epistemologies but yet Eastern epistemologies are now heavily infused, without sensitivity sometimes, into the West. I continuously struggle to defend Eastern epistemologies that are a part of myself against Orientalist assumptions. As I aim to improve my pedagogy, I am aware of the postcolonial space in which I am part.

For this purpose, I use the overlapping pedagogical space to philosophize in a manner that aims to develop a de-Orientalized understanding of the East and the West. I do not assume absolute knowledge of the East. In many cases, I learn a great deal from participating in a discussion with non-Hindus about Hinduism. It is important to note though that I do not always feel as if I am an equal participant or facilitator during the discussions. Sometimes, I feel as if an uncontrollable predator is attempting to

overpower me while other times I feel as if I am wrongfully viewed as an all-knowing Hindu. Regardless, in many cases, I am forced to confront Orientalist ways of knowing as I defend Eastern epistemologies. During a philosophical discussion, each individual brings a personal dimension to the dialogue. My task as an educator is to present de-Orientalized knowledge as a stimulus for consideration and facilitate the discussion despite Orientalist ways of knowing that may influence the discourse. In this postcolonial space of teaching and learning, I cannot avoid the power struggle between Western and Eastern epistemologies. Self-study reminds me that my students and/or viewers of the dance trust me to serve as an educator who aims to collaborate in the learning process and not a manipulator who forces absolute perspectives onto individuals. With these pedagogical concerns in mind, I now relate diagram three as the ideal overlapping pedagogical space.

DIAGRAM 3 – This Venn diagram depicts the West with a big circle and the East with a smaller overlapping circle. This shows that the West dominates the East due to a long history of colonialism and Orientalist ideologies. The arrows show how the West and the East respectively use power to come together to educate in a manner that fosters a de-Orientalized development of knowledge. There is a quest to portray the de-Orientalized histories of the West and the East.

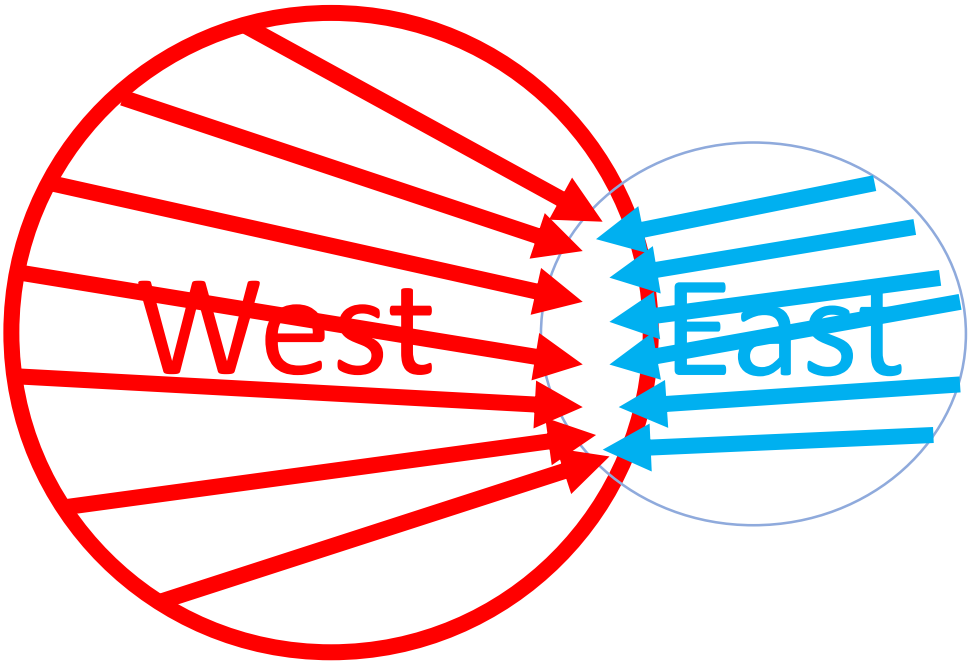



Diagram three relates the ideal overlapping pedagogical space as a space where de-Orientalized knowledge develops based on a comprehension of the de-Orientalized histories of the East and the West. The development of knowledge is based on learning and understanding both Western and Eastern ideals. In this pedagogical space, the goal is to think about the de-Orientalized histories of the East and the West. Both Westerners and Easterners develop knowledge with a willingness to understand Western and Eastern ideals without imposing Western or Eastern ideals on each other. Here, Westerners and Easterners may attempt to determine if there are universal ideals or pragmatic ideals. In this de-Orientalized space, Westerners and Easterners might develop a universal or a

pragmatic perspective. However, a postcolonial reality and Orientalist tendencies always shapes this difficult negotiation. Power always operates despite the attempt to remain open-minded. Even when both the West and the East are genuinely open to each other, a long history of colonialism and Orientalism informs the religious and cultural exchange, even though both parties may be unaware of this. The struggle, for many might be to apply a universal perspective in a pragmatic way. Essentially, the arrows that point to one another indicates the presence of a zone of contact where exchange occurs. Yet, there is also constant tension and possible antagonism.

With Said's viable theory of Orientalism and the possible solution that de-Orientalization provides to the thriving problem of Orientalism in mind, I focus my attention on myself as an educator. I use a self-study methodology[186] to pay close attention to the importance of my phenomenology while in the overlapping pedagogical space where I am both Eastern and Western because of my personal identity. While each person's narrative determines how knowledge develops, it is essential to engage in some sort of bracketing to learn in an overlapping pedagogical space. By bracketing, I mean there is a need to set aside personal beliefs so that there is an open mind to learn during the discussion. I use de-Orientalized pedagogy in the overlapping pedagogical space as I share my phenomenological experiences but yet bracket my own faith-based beliefs to prevent imposing faith-based views on those I wish to educate. This bracketing allows me to teach as well as learn with my own direct experience in mind. I essentially use my phenomenology as a pedagogical tool to engage in a natural, organic method of de-Orientalized teaching. Each educator's main pedagogical tool is the individual's ability

to teach. It is my hope that my phenomenology, as a pedagogical tool, helps non-Hindus develop de-Orientalized knowledge, perhaps in a phenomenological manner for non-Hindus that is open to philosophical inquiry. To be sure that I reject self-delusion, I endorse the use of the voice of my Peer Scholars, which I introduced in the previous chapter.

> "The use of another's voice in self-study is critical to move beyond self to examine practice. This type of research is also about taking chances, being open, exposing one's practice willingly, allowing for both the positive and the negative aspects of practice to be seen and explored. This can be a very daunting experience. But it is through this process of self examination, of collaboration with a critical/collegial friend (or two), that Self-study emerges as an experience with the potential to create an informed, entuned, opened self, interacting with others in ways that encourage and sustain learning for self and others. The results of such an experience in self-study about one's beliefs and practices can be long ranging and widespread, affecting more than just the researcher, but also the environment in which the researcher teaches."[187]

My Peer Scholars help me to explore my experiences further from a variety of perspectives. They help me learn to make myself vulnerable as I think about incidents. This is a two-way relationship where my Peer Scholars also make themselves vulnerable with me. Particularly, my Peer Scholar, shared his phenomenological experience after attending my lecture and dance presentation of the *Ramayana* at Drew University in Madison, NJ.[188] He states, "Leaving your presentation I felt as if I had attended a sort of mass, or that the divine had been channeled through you to us." As we discussed this, he helped me to realize that bracketing my own faith-based beliefs while using my phenomenology with caution helped him to feel as if I had channeled the divine. I shared my concern with him regarding whether or not I was imposing my own beliefs onto non-Hindus. He reassured me that I engaged in de-Orientalized pedagogy because I used my

phenomenology with sensitivity that acknowledged the epistemological frameworks of others. I did not use my power to control the views of non-Hindus but rather used my phenomenology to share my epistemological framework with sensitivity for others. To this extent, my Peer Scholar helped me to realize that my phenomenological experience helped to create an overlapping pedagogical space that aimed to engage in de-Orientalized knowledge development.

I now return back to diagrams one to three for a brief analysis. The above diagrams that relate the overlapping pedagogical space involve the use of power to *develop* knowledge. Here, there is not a concern of constructing new knowledge but rather building on prior knowledge of the West and the East to develop a stronger knowledge base. According to Said, there is a strong knowledge base that develops based on Orientalist perspectives. Said, essentially, describes Orientalist perspectives that deny agency to the East because the East exists to fulfill the desires of the West. Said relates the need to de-Orientalize Western views of the East.

The diagrams relate to me phenomenologically as an educator who employs a self-study methodology. As an educator and life-long learner, I fall prey to Orientalist knowledge development, as presented in diagram one, if I allow solely Western ideals to influence my epistemological development, which in turn will affect how I teach. In this Orientalist overlapping pedagogical space, Westerners may attempt to convert me from Eastern to solely Western ideological constructs. Westerners who create a false sense of Orientalist knowledge based on Western epistemology misuse power. On this flip side of this, I misuse power, as shown in diagram two, if I attempt to intentionally subvert

Western religious traditions and/or convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. This might occur if I use my faith in Hinduism to exert power over non-Hindus. In this scenario, Orientalist knowledge develops solely based on Eastern ideals.

Diagram three portrays the ideal, pedagogical space that fosters de-Orientalized knowledge development. In this pedagogical space, I hope to share my faith in Hinduism through my phenomenological experience and also relate how my epistemological ideals develop partly because of Hinduism. I hope non-Hindus sense my genuineness and know that I do not wish to use my power as an educator to subvert Western religious traditions or convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. For this reason, as I employ a self-study methodology, I pay close attention to how I use my authority as an educator. I hope to use my authority as an educator to provide a pedagogical space where Westerners and Easterners, non-Hindus and Hindus, can develop knowledge in a de-Orientalized manner.

Overall, in this ideal overlapping pedagogical space, I propose self-study researchers step back with the urgent need for de-Orientalization.

> "It is very difficult to step back from personal experience and examine it in a detached manner. Self-study calls for this stepping back to happen, it is central to the work of self-study. Therefore, being able to illustrate that one does respond to this difficulty is important in demonstrating that self-study is not about simply rationalizing existing behaviors, but honestly examining practice."[189]

Educators bring their personal experience to pedagogical spaces. To this extent, there is a need for educators to examine their pedagogy in a detached manner that calls for "stepping back". Once educators "step back", they then have the opportunity to challenge their assumptions and confirm their beliefs by attempting to use primary sources to find a de-Orientalized representation of the facts, thus engaging in a de-

Orientalized pedagogy. I maintain that a de-Orientalized knowledge base leads us to a space of hybridity where something new has the potential to develop. With the connection between de-Orientalized knowledge development and the construction of something new in mind, I now relate Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity.

*Hybridity: Homi Bhabha*

While Said provides a clear description of the problem of Orientalism and the potential solution as de-Orientalism, Homi Bhabha[190] takes Said's claim further. Bhabha does not believe there is a real dichotomy between the East and the West. Bhabha's critical problem is this false dichotomy that occurs when we separate the East and the West. With his critical problem of the false dichotomy of the East and the West in mind, Bhabha helps me to think about how knowledge is *constructed*. In this case, the West and the East do not use power to *develop* knowledge based on Western and Eastern ideals. Rather, the West and the East cannot be separated from each other since there is only cultural hybridity that *constructs* something new. This newness may be something new that is both Western and Eastern yet not Western or Eastern.

I sense this inevitable newness as I come to terms with my hybrid identity as an Easterner and Westerner. For instance, clothing becomes a struggle for me as a Western woman who has an Eastern epistemological framework. Although I do wear dresses and high heels in academia, I do wish I could wear saaris and sandals all the time. However, it is not the appropriate type of clothing for me to wear on a daily basis in a Western world where I am also Western. Sometimes, I attempt to construct hybrid outfits that make me feel comfortable as an Easterner and a Westerner. When I presented in

November 2013 at the American Academy of Religion Annual Conference[191] in Baltimore, Maryland, I did not engage in a Hindu dance albeit I spoke about Hindu dance. With the nature of the presentation in mind, I decided to wear clothing that blended my Eastern and Western identity.

I felt interconnected with my family through my clothing. My mother gave me the necklace and earrings as well as the colorful shawl, which was from a lehnga (Indian skirt) outfit. Also, I wore a pink-stoned ring that my brother and bouji gave to me on my sixteenth birthday. The color green reminded me of the upcoming Christmas religious holiday season as well as the forest regions of Mother Earth. The ornaments and clothing has a special significance to me that made me feel connected to something beyond myself. At first, I thought I would wear a shalvar for the presentation since I was

presenting on Hindu dance. After a long discussion with my Peer Scholars, I decided that I should not wear a shalvar since I did not plan a dance demonstration as part of the presentation. I must remain in fidelity to my hybrid identity, which sometimes I express through my clothing. Even when I wear Western clothing, I am still a woman of Eastern descent with a hybrid identity that cannot forget the legacy of my family history or ancestry.

Building on Said's coined term *Orientalism*, Homi Bhabha[192] develops the term *hybridity* to relate this newness, which deals with the conjoining of cultures because of diasporic movements. Essentially, Bhabha indicates that the boundaries of the East and the West are illusory. Religions and cultures are not neatly compartmentalized into undisputed spheres but rather constantly endure transformation because of a never-ending movement that occurs across illusory boundaries. Bhabha's critical point is that we need to break through the illusory boundaries and join our histories in a space of hybridity as a potential solution to the false dichotomy between the East and the West.

Bhabha writes,

> "What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative signs of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself."[193]

Bhabha indicates that we need to think beyond the mere preservation of our past narratives, both personally and culturally and instead focus on both our present narratives and a new development of culture. In other words, it is crucial to think about how our

identities develop based on cultural differences. Cultures unify in a space of hybridity to develop something *new* that is appropriate for a newly developing culture. It is important to note that self-study researchers refer to Bhabha's space of hybridity as a *third space* where something new develops. Hamilton refers to Bhabha as she discusses a third space.

> "This third space is the space between – that slips into and out of the margins to questions about the regimes of truth."[194]

Hamilton refers to the third space in the self-study methodology as a space where individuals need to maintain a balance between self-awareness and interrogation. In other words, it is important to understand the personal dimension that the self-study researcher brings to this space, but it is also important to philosophize through the process of interrogation to sensitively develop something new.

Several educators[195] in higher education acknowledge that they educate in a third space where there is a risk with creativity. Whitchurch[196] focuses on the third space where professionals in the work force and scholars of the academic world meet to discuss leadership styles and management techniques. Whitchurch pays attention to the tensions that arise in the third space in an effort to negotiate with creativity to develop new forms of leadership and management styles.

For Bhabha, the construction of something *new* occurs in a pedagogical space of hybridity. Therefore, in a pedagogical space of hybridity, my goal is to construct something *new* with postcolonial realities in mind. I believe creativity is the essential pedagogical tool in this pedagogical space. However, as mentioned earlier, in order for creativity to thrive in a de-Orientalized manner, it is first imperative to return to Said and

build the prior knowledge of learners through de-Orientalization. This will help learners to develop a sensitive approach to creativity because learners will become familiar with the de-Orientalized knowledge of the East and the West. In other words, on the one hand, those who use a de-Orientalized knowledge base appropriate creativity in a productive manner that does not further Orientalist or colonialist agendas. On the other hand, those who use an Orientalized knowledge base misappropriate creativity in a non-productive manner that causes Orientalist and colonialist agendas to thrive.

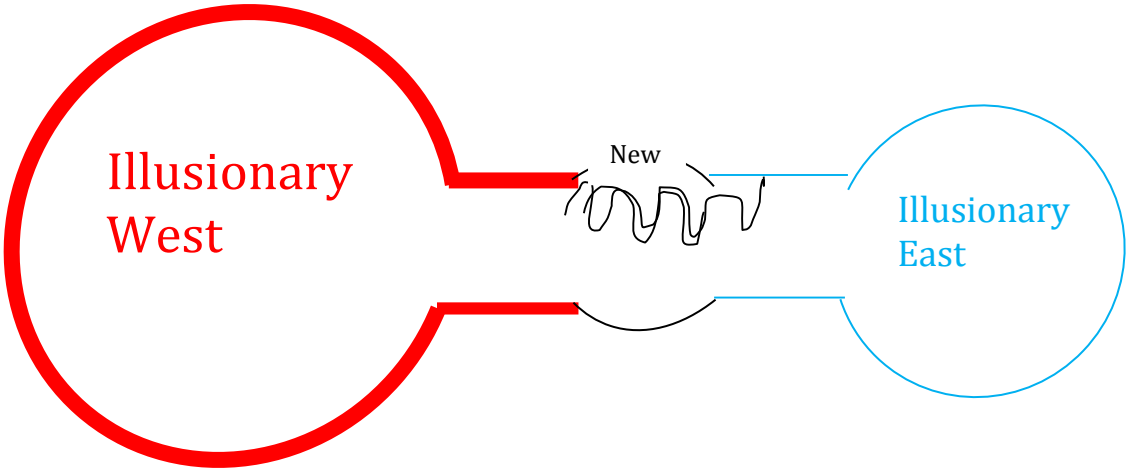
Here, Savin-Baden's notion of a reflective learning space is crucial.

> "To be in a position of transformational reflective space is reflexive, because it prompts an examination of beliefs, values and identity. One of the difficulties with the conception of reflexivity is that how you see it depends upon where you are coming from. As a concept it is deeply embedded in both our perceptions of self and our perspectives of the world, which ultimately are connected to our personal stance. Thus, when we are engaging with reflective spaces there is sense that we are located in an interrupted world."[197]

Savin-Baden indicates that the reflexive learning space is transformative because there is a careful scrutiny of beliefs that shape identities. Individuals will determine their beliefs based on their perspective, but it is crucial to reflect on these perspectives collectively as teaching and learning occur together. Learning becomes transformative when it is reflexive in a manner that prompts the examination of epistemological beliefs.

While Said urges me to think in terms of Venn diagrams, Bhabha helps me to refine my thought. Bhabha urges me to move past the illusory overlapping space of the Venn diagram. Here, I think of an illusionary Eastern sphere and an illusionary Western sphere that is joined together in the space of hybridity where something new is constructed.

DIAGRAM – This diagram depicts the space of hybridity between the illusionary West and the illusionary East. Newness develops in the space of hybridity. This newness has the space to develop its own sphere between the West and the East. This new sphere is neither Western nor Eastern but yet both Western and Eastern.




In this space of hybridity, interreligious dialogue and cultural contact is essential to understanding the nature of religion and culture in a manner that does not engage in the dangerous misrepresentation that occurs based on Orientalist interpretations. The main goal in this space of hybridity is not to teach about Western and Eastern values. Instead the goal is to *construct* something new. Western and Eastern ideals are a part of the growth of something *new*.

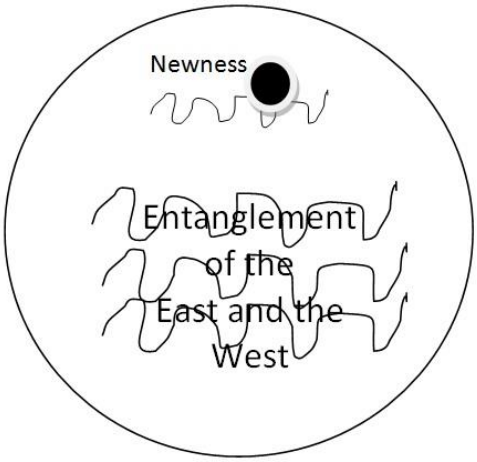
In the space of hybridity, the ideals of the West and the East are entangled. The ideals are used to think philosophically about what works now. I think of this newness that develops in the space of hybridity as a type of blending that has the ability to grow into something that might work pragmatically for both the West and the East. Bhabha displays this as he writes,

> "The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become

> confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting."[198]

Evidently, the boundaries of the West and the East are illusionary borders that are displaced because of the nature of cultures to interact and produce difference. The paradoxes of "home and world" and "private and public" unite instead of divide. This unity is essentially Bhabha's solution to his critical problem of the illusionary boundaries. A new culture for humanity can only develop when the East and the West unite and move towards the development of a *new* cultural identity that acknowledges a humanitarian culture.

DIAGRAM – This diagram depicts the space of hybridity. In this pedagogical space, the West and the East are entangled. From this entanglement, something new develops that is neither Western nor Eastern, but yet Western and Eastern.




As the diagram shows, it is crucial to unite the West and the East in a manner that acknowledges the inevitable intertwining of cultures. Only then will there be an opportunity for the development of a *new* culture for humanity. Bhabha writes,

> "The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living."[199]

My pedagogy of how I use Hindu dance to educate is a type of "cultural translation" that does not aim to "recall the past" of Hinduism. Through the dance, I "renew" the past in an effort to educate in an "in-between" space that acknowledges the present. The past, present, and future are tied into my act of cultural translation. Essentially, Bhabha brings me to the conclusion that it is imperative to engage in the construction of something new in the space of hybridity with, as Said would concur, de-Orientalized constructed knowledge and sensitivity for both Western and Eastern ideals. This newness creates a means for the East and the West to understand their interconnectedness and co-dependency. De-Orientalization allows sensitivity to remain present for the West and the East. Without sensitivity, there is a great risk for the construction of an Orientalist ideology in the space of hybridity. This Orientalist ideology may have the power to grow, deconstruct de-Orientalized knowledge, and further Orientalist agendas. Thus, it is crucial to tread with caution in the space of hybridity because what develops there has the ability to transform both the West and the East.

I use the third space of hybridity to contribute to the construction of something new that is appropriate for both the West and the East. Specifically, I hope to construct a new genre of Indian classical dance that remains sensitive to the Eastern religious traditions of Hinduism but also is appropriate to share with non-Hindu Westerners. Here

is an example of how I constructed a new method for teaching Indian classical dance for non-Hindus in the space of hybridity.

I was once asked to teach an eight-week Indian classical dance class as a part of the after school Enrichment Program at Bradford School in Montclair, NJ.[200] I taught a small class of about six to eight female students from grades one to three. I had a daunting challenge to develop a course outline that remained faithful to Hinduism, while also adhering to the U.S. ideal of the separation of Church and State, as well as accommodating the cultural lifestyles of Western students. Therefore, I used the class to teach *about* Hinduism as opposed to imposing Hindu ideals. As I developed the curriculum, I felt nauseated at the prospect that I might unintentionally further Orientalism. I had to be mindful not to teach Hindu dance under the disguise of multiculturalism because this would strip Hindu dance of its core. In this vulnerable space, I had to develop a curriculum that taught about something new that did not represent or misrepresent Hinduism.

My students and I would sit in a circle on the hardwood polished floor of the music room as we would discuss the uses and misuses of Indian classical dance. While I did teach the students hand gestures according to the sacred Hindu text, the *Abhinaya Darpanam*,[201] I explained to the students how to use the gestures. We carefully discussed the religious nature of Indian classical dance. I chose my words and phrases cautiously, as I was mindful of the statutes about Church and State. I spoke to the students about using the hand gestures with sensitivity for Indian classical dance once the course is over.

Essentially, I aimed to de-Orientalize the perspectives of the learners before I used the gestures to teach Indian classical dance in the pedagogical space of hybridity.

I thought about how to appropriate the curriculum of Hindu dance as opposed to misappropriate. I did not teach the students a Hindu classical dance piece, but rather taught the students an instrumental dance piece that was choreographed to teach *about* Hinduism. This dance piece was very different than a dance piece in which the dancer phenomenologically serves as conduit of Hinduism and shares faith in Hinduism through the dance.

Throughout this process, I used a self-study methodology to help me remain self-aware of my personal dimension as a Hindu dancer but also open to inquiry in the space of hybridity. I communicated with my Peer Scholars about each class session. In fact, I usually would meet my professor, who was one of my Peer Scholars, after each class session, during the same day, to reflect on my pedagogy. I would share my concerns and challenges in an effort to gain some insight on how I should pursue the class sessions.

As an educator of Indian classical dance, I trusted the students with knowledge of a sacred tradition and also trusted that the students will not use the hand gestures to engage in Orientalism. While I cannot control what the students – especially such young students - do with their knowledge of Indian classical dance, I trust that my phenomenological experience as a teacher indicates the sensitive receptiveness of my pedagogy to the students. If I see that the students further Orientalism, then I as the educator, have the choice to continue to teach or not to teach. If I choose to continue to

teach, then as the educator, I can use my phenomenological experience to determine what to teach. Here is an example taken from a part of my journal entry.

> "For example, I taught the students about the Hindu God, Shri Ganesha, who is the remover of obstacles who has a metaphorical elephant head. When I showed the class a picture of Shri Ganesha, one of the girls said "Ewwwwwww" with a disgusted look on her face. I asked her why she felt disgusted at the sight of the picture. She told me that Shri Ganesh has an elephant head and four arms. She said that no humans that live in this universe have more than one arm or have an elephant head. I explained that the elephant head metaphorically represents knowledge. I also related that each arm is a metaphor for others who lend a helping hand. For example in a family of three, there might be six hands total in that family if we assume that each person has two hands. The young girl understood my explanation but nevertheless still thought the picture was repulsive. I felt that I handled the situation as a respectable educator who honors the inquiries of children, but still needed to press the discussion further. We did not discuss genetic mutations or certain abnormalities across the human species. At any rate, I also felt saddened that the young girl thought the picture, and possibly by extension Hinduism and myself, was filthy with abnormalities. I wish I pressed the discussion further with the class but instead I went on to focus on the dance portion of the class session.
>
> There is a sacred Hindu dance pose to depict Ganesha, the God with an elephant head. Instead of teaching the students the sacred Hindu dance pose, I taught the students how to show an elephant using the Hindu dance gestures. The elephant step depicts the manner in which elephants sweep away obstacles with their trunk. Here, I taught in the space of hybridity as I sought to develop a sensitive way of teaching *about* Hinduism without enforcing Hinduism. Throughout the experience, it seemed as if I was forced to water-down sacred Hindu dance to a hybrid dance form that possibly may have Orientalized Hindu dance under the disguise of multicultural education. I feel that the pedagogical space of hybridity is a space to *come together* to develop something new. Instead, I had to develop something new *on my own* in a space where I had to blend with a Western epistemology of multicultural dance.
>
> As I taught this course, I deeply struggled with whether or not I engaged in de-Orientalized pedagogy. I wish to remain faithful to Hindu dance ethics, but I also hope to share Hindu dance with students who desire to learn about Indian classical dance. I am sure that there are flaws with the manner in which I taught the class. Nevertheless, with a self-study methodology in the space of hybridity, I was able to develop a unique contemplative form of Indian classical dance that does not mandate that students phenomenologically practice Hinduism. While I did not create a completely new dance genre, I most certainly created a unique and new curriculum for teaching Indian classical dance to children in the West to

> teach *about* Hinduism. However, this needs more exploration to prevent Orientalism from flourishing."[202]

At first I thought that this might compare to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) classes held by many churches for adults who wish to convert to Christianity. However, my Peer Scholar pointed out to me that my goals significantly differ from those of the RCIA classes. In many cases, the RCIA classes educate with the goal of having an individual determine whether or not to move forward with conversion to Christianity. It is a faith-based education that causes many to non-Christians to become Christians. I do not wish to imply that this is necessarily negative, but just wish to point out that my goals differ. I engage in an academic religious-based education that does not aim to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. While I do not seek to convert non-Hindus, I do think a contemplative form of Indian classical dance might help non-Hindus explore and understand Hinduism. As I mentioned though, this requires much more exploration in the pedagogical space of hybridity to prevent Orientalism from thriving.

At any rate, Said urges me to use de-Orientalized pedagogy to help learners develop a representative portrayal of the East and the West while Bhabha urges me to think about how to teach in a space of hybridity in a manner that seeks to construct something new that remains sensitive to the East and the West. Moreover though, Bhabha urges me to engage in cultural practices that move across the illusionary boundaries of the East and the West. In this third space of hybridity, the issue of appropriation and misappropriation arises. The self-study methodology aims to appropriate knowledge not to misappropriate it. For this reason, it is crucial to remain sensitive as something new is constructed in the space of hybridity. A de-Orientalized

knowledge base helps to appropriate knowledge while in the process of constructing something new. On the contrary, Orientalized knowledge will run the risk of the misappropriation of knowledge as something new is constructed.

*Mirroring: Ashis Nandy*

Said and Bhabha, among other postcolonial scholars, move in the direction of dealing with the messiness of global politics with the goal of social transformation. To continue, intellectuals such as Ashis Nandy[203] employ a postcolonial theoretical framework that places Said's work, Bhabha's work, and the work of those who follow into perspective. Nandy's method[204] is tricky because he admits that he will write about a concept without mentioning the name of the concept about which he is talking. As noted earlier, he may write about poverty without even mentioning poverty for example.

Nevertheless, Nandy indicates in the introduction of *Time Warps*[205] that his method deals with mirroring. Nandy states,

> "Many living communities are 'dead' in academic texts and in public documents in the Southern world; policy-makers and scholars talk about them in the past tense even when they are a few feet away, perhaps just on the other side of the road. We exile these communities to history, so that we can safely bemoan their death, and thus dismiss all who remain concerned with them as incurable romantics."[206]

Nandy points out that there is a separation between the past and the present. Those who have power "exile" cultures into history in a manner that exerts an authority, which aims to "civilize" these very same cultures as part of current day society. Particularly though, Nandy's underlying implication is that the West and the East mirror each other, which is essentially Nandy's critical problem. First, there is the West that exists in a mirror of the "colonizer" and then there is the East that exists in a mirror of the "colonized". As the

West and the East mirror each other, perceptions develop based on illusionary images or images of what the "Other" should be.

As a psychologist of colonialism, Nandy acknowledges that the West and the East develop national images of Westerness and Easterness as well as respective Western and Eastern self-images. Thus, Western and Eastern identities develop based on how respective perceptions develop as the West and the East mirror each other. Here, more critical problems develop because of the assumptions made as the West and the East perceive each other as an "Other." These critical problems include Said's crisis of Orientalism, which easily develops when the West and the East separate themselves. Also, Bhabha's critical problem becomes evident as the West and the East set illusionary boundaries despite the fact that Western and Eastern culture intertwine. Nevertheless, it is crucial to think of the solution Nandy presents for his critical problem that occurs as the "colonized" and the "colonized" mirror each other. Nandy writes,

> "When another faith provides such a counterpoint or balancing principle, it no longer remains an alien faith or someone else's faith. You do not have to open inter-faith or inter-cultural dialogue with such a faith, to conform to contemporary sensitivities. The dialogue already exists, waiting to be joined."[207]

For Nandy, the solution is to acknowledge the humanitarian existence that binds all religions and cultures together. There is no "alien faith" or "someone else's faith". Thus, for Nandy, there is no need for an "inter-faith" or "inter-cultural" dialogue because there is already a common humanitarian faith that connects humanity. With this humanitarian existence in mind, Nandy's solution is to move from the micro to the macro in an attempt to connect the local to the global through the personal and the collective. This means that Nandy acknowledges that the histories of the "colonized" and the

"colonizer" intertwine on a variety of levels. Nandy urges individuals to think about how a humanitarian existence transcends illusionary boundaries. To press this point further, Nandy indicates that even if we think religion and culture is compartmentalized into neat spheres, the messiness of global politics is always present not just *within* each separate sphere but *among and between* these spheres. Nandy states,

> "Many communities see themselves as simultaneously Hindu and Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim, and Hindu and Christian. This is neither an instance of multiculturalism nor of, as properly educated Indians like to call it, syncretism. It seems to be the case of a society where identities are cross-cutting and the 'others' are telescoped into one's own self, and where none of the identities can be adequately depicted or defined without the presence of the others."[208]

Nandy indicates that communities do not simply come together in a unified manner. Each individual's personal narrative will determine how they view others. We can sometimes relate to the identities of others, but other times we cannot.

The self-study methodology causes me to pay close attention to the way educators could use mirrored reflections. Jerry Allender provides an example of this.

> "Jerry Allender (2001) notes in his own self-study that he used his students as a "mirror that encourages reflection on [his] teaching." As he wrote, he invited his students to incorporate their reflections. This collaborative design provides the reader with a double-lens camera: one that sees the course of study through the eye of the instructor, and the other through the eyes of the students. The collaboration with students is textual. Allender's self-reflections on his teaching come to life and gain meaning and relevance in light of the reflections of his students who, themselves, reflect on their learning experiences and how it affects (or will affect) their teaching practices."[209]

Allender indicates that he uses his students as a mirror to improve his own pedagogical practice. Allender must have had some preconceptions of his pedagogical style. The reflections from the students provided Allender with the opportunity to challenge his assumptions and confirm his beliefs. This is the collaborative process to

which Allender refers, which is different from the third space of hybridity mentioned in the previous section. Here, the educator reflects from one mirror while the students reflect from another mirror. Essentially, each reflection develops based on what the other mirror suggests. The students help Allender to reflect just as Allender's teaching style causes the students to reflect. This is one way to use a mirrored reflection in the self-study methodology.

Savin-Baden points to the academic nomad as an individual who reflects on epistemology in the hope of self-emancipation.

> "The notion of being an academic nomad reflects the sense that being an academic in higher education is about the development of one's identity through knowledge reconstruction, creation and understanding, it is about self-emancipation."[210]

The academic nomad aims to develop an identity by constantly rethinking knowledge with constant reflection. The identity of the academic nomad reflects the individual's ability to rethink what counts as knowledge. The academic nomad hopes to gain self-emancipation, which entails a state of freedom from restraints that chain an individual to supremacist ideologies.

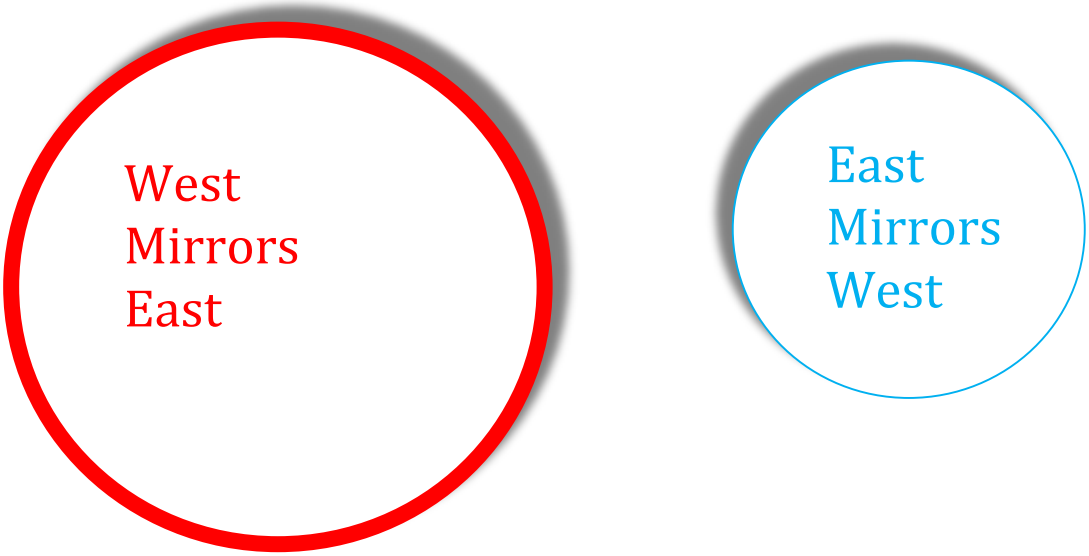
As I return back to Nandy who presents his philosophical method of mirroring as one that acknowledges the "colonizer" and the "colonized", I will move beyond this type of mirroring and onto a pedagogical space of mirroring. I do not aim to separate the West and the East into false dichotomies in a space of mirroring. On the contrary, I acknowledge a false illusionary separation of the West and the East that has the potential to help de-Orientalize false interpretations of the East and the West. I do not wish to break the mirror of the colonizer and the colonized, but rather I hope to transform the

reflection seen in the mirror. In a pedagogical space of mirroring, my goal is to provide a space for a de-Orientalized interpretation of Hinduism that fosters a de-Orientalized development of knowledge. There is a strong emphasis on self-interpretation in this pedagogical space of mirroring. For this purpose, I employ a self-study methodology as I rely on my own phenomenology as I dance to educate non-Hindus. Even during a theatrical performance, it is imperative to provide non-Hindus with a de-Orientalized relation of Hinduism. In other words, non-Hindus need to first understand the danger of Orientalism and then they need to build a de-Orientalized knowledge base to understand Hinduism from a de-Orientalized perspective. This will help non-Hindus understand and hopefully appreciate the dance.

Even though this space of mirroring may seem similar to the overlapping pedagogical space, it differs in the sense that the pedagogical space of mirroring does not include a dialogical space of inquiry. Here, non-Hindus witness a Kuchipudi dance where there is no discussion. Thus, there is a separation of me, in one mirror, as the performer who aims to educate and a separation non-Hindus, in another mirror. Non-Hindus view the performance, in one mirror, in a manner that attempts to witness and/or learn. The illusionary mirrors exist because there is no dialogue to connect me as the performer with those who witness the performance or wish to learn about the performance. Therefore, I must simply trust my phenomenological experiences to educate and also trust that those who witness the performance or learn about Hinduism through the performance will have a de-Orientalized interpretation of Hinduism.

Essentially, the Venn diagram of Said and the hybridity that includes the joining space of the spheres of Bhabha is broken into two separate spheres that mirror each other in Nandy's work. The East mirrors the West and vice versa. Westerners and Easterners mirror one another when there is a space for internal dialogue based on self-interpretation. There is no room for dialogical inquiry with a group of participants but rather only a space for self-interpretation.

DIAGRAM – This diagram depicts the West and the East as separate entities that mirror each other.




Theatrical performances provide an example of mirroring. The Westerner who views an Eastern performance is left to self-interpret the performance based on the West's own knowledge of the East, which may or may not be de-Orientalized. The same applies to the Easterner who views a Western performance.

In this self-internalized pedagogical space, the mirror has the potential to serve as an Orientalist mirror that creates an illusory image because the West or the East may see what is not there. The interpretation relates to who we are individually as Westerners

and/or Easterners. The mirror has the potential to create Orientalist knowledge, which leads to false truth. It seems that an Orientalist mirror starts with the assumption that either the West or the East dominates the other. Westerners may feel superior to Easterners whereas Easterners may feel superior to Westerners. Regardless of whether or not dominance is present, the *belief* of dominance is likely present in an Orientalist mirror.

The mirror also has the potential to act as a de-Orientalized mirror that unveils Orientalism, albeit the mirror is only a reflection of what we think reality is. Nevertheless, this type of mirror creates de-Orientalized knowledge that helps to reveal concealed Orientalism. Interpretations of reality are reflected off or through the mirror that has the potential to disrupt Orientalism. A de-Orientalized mirror does not assume that the West dominates the East or vice versa. There is no belief of superiority in a de-Orientalized mirror, even though in reality, there is some dominance that occurs. In this de-Orientalized pedagogical space of mirroring, the *belief* of equality is present, even though in reality, the West and the East are not equal. Although this equality is always a struggle due to the postcolonial space that I teach in, this *belief* of equality, allows the West and the East to maintain an open-mind to learn about each respective sphere without imposing Western or Eastern standards.

As I plan theatrical performances that do not provide a space for dialogical inquiry, I think carefully about what I would like non-Hindus to view in the mirror. I hope to use my authority as a performer to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism in a theatrical, de-Orientalized manner that acknowledges postcolonial realities. To

accomplish this goal, I employ a self-study methodology that causes me to remain self-aware of my own phenomenology while developing appropriate pedagogy for a theatrical space.

During a solo featured dance recital, *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance*, at Montclair State University in Memorial Auditorium on Sunday, April 21, 2013,[211] I served as an educator in a theatrical space as I aimed to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism with postcolonial realities in mind. When I stood in the theatre with Dr. Esmida Abreu-Hornbostel, Gene Lotito, and Michael Aquino at our home school, Montclair State University, I realized that I had to develop the appropriate pedagogy to teach about Hinduism in a theatrical space. I also remained mindful of my own contemplative practices as a faith-based Hindu dancer that required my full attention for the event. As I stood on the stage during the initial visit to the auditorium, I realized that I was in the mirroring space that Nandy writes about. Therefore, I had to develop visual teaching clips to position myself as a faith-based Hindu dancer to teach about Hinduism with Nandy's concerns in mind.

For months, my loyal friends Sean O'Connor, Arielle Rodriguez, Hank Fandel, Jaime Sommer, and Jocelyn Choi met me on the Montclair State University campus on the weekends to film all of the visual teaching clips. Sometimes we would film from noon to seven o'clock p.m. all weekend. There were many challenges such as finding a quiet location without construction noise, sports noise, people passing through, and also weather conditions. In addition, we had to carry the camcorder, camcorder stand, the

easel with the filming outline, and other miscellaneous items. Sometimes, we would have to stop filming to recharge the camcorder battery.

I desired to film outdoors in different parts of the campus to bring the outside into the auditorium on the day of the event. It was my attempt to share the beautiful Montclair State University campus with the viewers of the dance. Yet, I had the opportunity to share a great deal of contemplative time with my reliable friends who helped me to successfully put together visual teaching clips. Hank and I sat for a while outdoors on the grass in the quad in front of the Student Center as we discussed how we came to this particular point in our lives. Arielle and I talked a lot about graduate school as we walked the path behind the Village dormitory near the stream. Sean O'Connor and I talked in depth, as we walked the campus to find appropriate filming locations, about his upcoming venture to Japan, which he was scheduled to leave for in Summer 2013. Jocelyn and I discussed humanitarian events that she worked for in the past as we shared a meal after many of the filming sessions. I am very grateful to have such wonderful peers who stand by me regardless of what their busy lives entail. They took turns to make sure that I had someone with me as I planned to film the teaching clips. I sincerely feel they assisted me out of the kindness of their hearts without any expectations, except perhaps the anticipation of my success and our continued friendship.

To return to the day of the event, in this pedagogical space of mirroring, I informed the viewers, mostly non-Hindus, of my contemplative practices that occur before, during, and after the performance. This helped non-Hindus to acknowledge that Kuchipudi Indian classical dance is more than a mere performance. I did this by using a

visual clip to introduce myself as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer. I briefly discussed Orientalism and the postcolonial realities that surround Hindu dance. Second, I used visual clips in between dances to introduce each dance. The purpose of the visual clip, which non-Hindus viewed on a projector screen, was to provide a pedagogical space for non-Hindus to develop a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hinduism. As I explained each Hindu dance, I also introduced my contemplative practices as a faith-based Hindu dancer.

| **Hindu dance** | **Contemplative Practice Introduced Through Visual Teaching Clip** |
|---|---|
| *Pushpanjali and Devi Kritti* | Interconnectedness |
| *Tillana* | Care for the Self and Letting Go of the Self |
| *Tarangam* | Bhakti (phenomenological state of divine bliss) |
| *Mangalam* | One and the Many |
| *Hari Sundara Nanda Mukunda (Hindu Chant with live musicians.)* | Experience |

Throughout the entire event, my phenomenological experience indicated that I created a de-Orientalized mirror, albeit through a theatrical performance, that helped non-Hindus learn about Hinduism. The viewers of the dances, which included several of my family members, were very quiet during the event. My brother said that he had to pay close attention to hear the visual teaching clips due to the wind factor. Everyone seemed to listen closely with sensitivity to understand the dances as I intended. I felt as if I was

in a heavenly-mirrored space where One Supreme Being manifested in several forms to fill perimeter of the stage and the entire auditorium. I sensed my father's soul seated in a lotus position with all white clothing and the sacred red thread on his hand that Hindus wear when they perform puja (Hindu worship). It was as if all around me, celestial beings showered me with sweet-scented colorful flowers as a sign of blessings. I was in a spiritual abode where I was fully loved by a Supreme Being who blessed me to fulfill my purpose as a faith-based Hindu dancer. Several viewers of the event approached me after the event to thank me for the education that I provided in the theatrical space. I felt as if everyone learned a little about Hinduism though Kuchipudi dance. This phenomenological feeling caused me to feel that I successfully used pedagogy appropriately in a theatrical space of mirroring.

Here, I perform in a solo recital, *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance* at Montclair State University on April 21, 2013. My phenomenological experience caused me to feel that I successfully used Kuchipudi dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. This dance gesture ironically suggests "success" or "victory" in dance language. In this particular pose, I give thanks to a Supreme Being whose blessings bring success to me as a Hindu dancer.

After the event, I received several text messages and voice messages from family and friends. I also had many emails from close friends as well as acquaintances. The many correspondences caused me to realize that I moved past the illusionary mirroring

space. I felt as if the viewers and I met together through our inner spiritual eyes in a space of Oneness where we had a blissful experience. It was as if my entire being was filled with a balance of contentment. I was not overjoyed nor was I distressed but rather I had a sense of equanimity that calmed my soul.

Dear Sabrina,

You were AWESOME! It was truly an amazing performance! I have seen you dance before but nothing like this. You are a true athlete in addition to the spiritual and intellectual discipline evident in your performance. Thank you for a profoundly remarkable afternoon. I only wish that the thousands of people who would have been equally enthralled could have known about it. You deserved an enormous audience. Thank you for letting me be a little help. Let me know if you're planning any other performances. Stay well.

All the best,

...

Hank

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*Implications for Educators Across the Disciplines*

Educators, regardless of the discipline, need to maintain an ongoing interest in the pedagogical space in which they teach. While I focus on the overlapping space of Said, the third space of hybridity of Bhabha, and the mirroring space of Nandy, there are probably many more. Regardless, the awareness of de-Orientalized pedagogical spaces helps educators determine *how* to teach and what pedagogical tools to use to teach. Once educators are aware of the pedagogical space that they teach in, they can focus on *what* to teach in a learning space.

I specifically focus my attention on the abstract, postcolonial pedagogical spaces. Although concrete pedagogical spaces are not the focus of this chapter, it is crucial to consider the link between the abstract, postcolonial pedagogical spaces and the concrete pedagogical spaces. Here, I use the term concrete pedagogical spaces to refer to the physical arrangement within the pedagogical environment. This may include the seating

arrangements of the students, location of the educator's desk, furniture in the setting, décor elements, and so forth. While early childhood, elementary, and secondary teachers usually have their very own classroom, that allow them to create their own concrete pedagogical space[212], higher education instructors do not. This does not mean that in higher education we do not have the opportunity to create our own concrete pedagogical space.[213] Professors should gain prior knowledge of the concrete pedagogical space that they will teach in. For instance, some university classrooms have tables and chairs while others have desks. Some classrooms have smartboards with technological equipment whereas others have chalkboards. Even though professors cannot change the skeleton of the concrete pedagogical space that they teach in, they should maintain awareness of this space.

When I use Kuchipudi dance pedagogically in higher education classrooms, I inquire about the space. I aim to gain prior knowledge of the space as I ask questions, which usually include the following. What kind of flooring is in the classroom? This is important because I dance barefoot. Is there is smartboard or a chalkboard? Where is the professor's desk located? What is the seating arrangement for the students? For instance, do the students sit in rows, in a circle, at tables and chairs, or in a tiered lecture hall arrangement? These questions are especially important because the answers determine how I teach and dance in the space. I don't just inquire for pedagogical reasons but also for sacred reasons. Traditionally, directions play an important role in Hinduism. It is important to know which way is North, South, East, and West as well as

the limitations of the space that might cause me to modify my sacred contemplative practices.

Essentially, while I aim to teach in an overlapping pedagogical space, the third space of hybridity, and the pedagogical space of mirroring, these abstract pedagogical spaces are linked to the physicality of the pedagogical space and my positionality as a self-study researcher. In an overlapping pedagogical space, a seating arrangement in the form of a circle or a u-shape helps to promote an empathetic dialogue. The space of hybridity might require a dance studio space. In the pedagogical space of mirroring, theatre-style seating or a seating arrangement in the form of rows helps to promote the crucial mirroring. Sometimes, the abstract pedagogical spaces are determined by the concrete nature of the pedagogical spaces whereas other times the concrete nature of the pedagogical spaces determines the abstract nature of the pedagogical space. Here, I think especially of the pedagogical space of the theatre. In the theatre, I aim to use Kuchipudi dance pedagogically to educate. How do I teach in a theatrical space? I certainly cannot move the theatre seats or determine the concrete nature of the stage. However, I could use the pedagogical tools that accompany the pedagogical space of mirroring in the theatre space. Now if I were in the pedagogical space of a classroom with desks and chairs, I might have the option of choosing to rearrange the furniture to endorse a particular abstract pedagogical space. For instance, I could arrange the desks into a semi-circle as I dance and then engage in a dialogue with the students.

In this chapter, I employed my self-study methodology to relate the de-Orientalized, postcolonial pedagogical spaces that I teach in when I use Kuchipudi Indian

classical Hindu dance pedagogically. Now, I must move on to deal with an assumption that viewers of the dance maintain regarding who I am as a Hindu dancer. In many cases, when I visit Religious Studies classrooms to present and dance or when I am an invited guest speaker at university campuses, many professors tell their students that a Hindu liturgical dancer will present. This is an assumption that equates the ancient traditions of Hindu dance with the modernized tradition of Christian liturgical dance. I deal with this assumption in the next chapter.

# Chapter 4

## The Postcolonial Reality of Using the Term “Liturgical” To Describe Hindu Dance

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Even though I am a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, many Western colleagues of mine use the term “liturgical dancer” to describe me. In one particular instance at the Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion annual conference in New Brunswick, New Jersey during 2012[214], a Catholic theologian colleague of mine referred to me as a Hindu liturgical dancer. My colleague then asked if this would be an accurate way to describe who I am. With sincere sensitivity, my colleague caused me to pay close attention to my phenomenology with a self-study methodology in mind. I experienced some discomfort when my colleague referred to me as a liturgical Hindu dancer. I told my colleague that I was not sure if I am a Hindu liturgical dancer because I was unfamiliar with the term “liturgical” in the sense of “liturgical dance”. Therefore, I did not know if I was a liturgical Hindu dancer.

Throughout my graduate experience, unlike the above-mentioned colleague, several colleagues have insensitively referred to me as a Hindu liturgical dancer without asking if this is an adequate way to describe who I am. I have also been called a “belly dancer”, “Middle Eastern dancer”, and a “Pan-Asian dancer”, which are also inadequate, insensitive descriptions of me as a dancer. The terms that my colleagues use to describe me impacts on my pedagogy because I become aware of the need for me to engage in a

particular kind of de-Orientalization. For example, if my colleagues maintain a preconceived notion that I am a “belly dancer”, then I will de-Orientalize this by providing a comparative analysis of the distinct differences between sacred Hindu dance and belly dance in an effort to correct the misrepresentation of my identity as a dancer. While the abovementioned descriptions are important to address for other purposes, I will specifically focus on why I am not a “liturgical dancer” in this chapter. I chose to deal with this assumption because in academia, this is what I am mostly referred to as. Thus, there is a personal need for me to unpack the term “liturgical” since many individuals have this interpretation of me as a dancer before I even enter a pedagogical space. This is essential for me to address because I hope my colleagues will use a de-Orientalized pedagogy to build the prior knowledge of viewers of my lectures and dance presentations before I enter a pedagogical space to teach. I ask my colleagues to endorse a de-Orientalized interpretation of me as a Hindu dancer and reject an Orientalized interpretation.

As I researched liturgical dance, I had the opportunity to discuss the research with Donna LaRue, a liturgical dancer and independent scholar from Boston, Massachusetts. La Rue helped me to challenge my assumptions and confirm my interpretation of liturgical dance. My Peer Scholars also engaged in a dialogue with me as I researched liturgical dance. I arrived at the conclusion that I am not a liturgical dancer after engaging in an intensive dialogue with LaRue and my Peer Scholars. Thus, this chapter develops based on my interaction with the research and my respected colleagues.

In this chapter, I challenge the assumption of Westerners who describe me as a Hindu liturgical dancer. I begin with an analysis of Said's postcolonial theoretical perspective that deals with the urgency to unpack terms to reject Orientalization. Here, in relation to the previous chapter, I engage in a de-Orientalized pedagogy through the written text as I present facts of Hindu dance and liturgical dance in an overlapping pedagogical space. Once this occurs, then I address another urgent postcolonial issue, which deals with the misuses of Hindu dance. It is crucial for me to point out that both Westerners and Easterners, who have an Orientalist interpretation of Hinduism as a part of liturgical dance, causes Orientalism to thrive. To prevent further misuse of Hindu dance, I propose contemplative spiritual dance in the pedagogical space of hybridity as a medium where liturgical dancers and Hindu dancers can dance together without Orientalizing each respective dance tradition.

It is important to note that I specifically focus on liturgical dance as a genre of Christian dance. This is because the literature vastly describes liturgical dance as Christian dance.[215] The term "liturgical dance" is widely associated with Christian liturgical dance even though the term may extend beyond Christianity. Within the Christian liturgical dance structure, there is controversy among Christian denominations since some embrace dance religiously and others do not.[216] My focus is not to discuss this controversy but rather my goal is to relate the genre of Christian liturgical dance, which some Christians embrace and others ban. Here, I do not refer to the carefully orchestrated processions or activity at the Vatican, which is part of the liturgy and deemed by some as "liturgical dance", but rather I refer to the system of Christian

liturgical dance as a specific type of genre of dance. Even though some might call all religious dance movement across religious traditions liturgical, I focus specifically on how the specific genre of Christian liturgical dance differs from Hindu dance.

While there are similarities between the genres of Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance, there are also very distinct differences. For instance, there is a difference in how each respective dance genre developed. The religious support for the development of Christian liturgical dance traditionally differs from the religious support for the development of Hindu dance. In turn, the pedagogy used to teach a Christian liturgical dance curriculum differs from the pedagogy used to teach a Hindu dance curriculum. I do not wish to create a false dichotomy between Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance. What I am saying is that it is imperative to acknowledge the similarities and the distinct differences between both genres of dance. Once there is sensitivity for Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance, then I propose contemplative spiritual dance as a viable dance genre that sensitively entangles Christian liturgical dancers and Hindu dancers. In this pedagogical space, there is an opportunity for a new dance genre to develop with sensitivity for each respective dance genre.

After familiarizing myself with the liturgical dance literature, I do understand why my colleagues refer to me as a "liturgical dancer". Carla DeSola, a liturgical dance pioneer, helps me to understand this as she writes,

> "Practiced by liturgical artists, dance serves and functions as a conduit from the inner workings of the spirit to the outer expression of today's worship. As an art form that is fleeting, evanescent, and transient, dance makes an indelible impression upon the viewer."[217]

Evidently both liturgical dance and Kuchipudi dance provide the dancer with a phenomenological experience as the dancer uses the body to channel a divine energy. DeSola claims that while the dance lasts a seemingly short time, the dance still leaves a permanent impression on the viewers. Based on my own phenomenological experience, I sense that the dance does leave an indelible mark on the dancer. It seems that there is some indelibility caused by liturgical and Kuchipudi dance.

DeSola continues to write,

> "Communication is body-to-body with the distance between sanctuary to pew being traversed kinesthetically. The viewer is in living communication with the dancer, sharing the configurations of space, form, movement qualities, musical, and visual elements."[218]

This quote assumes that the audience has a phenomenological experience through the dance. It seems to me that those who identify me as a "liturgical dancer" probably feel a religious presence and religious connection with me as a dancer, which causes them to use the word "liturgical" to describe me. Nevertheless, it is crucial for me to reveal the complex nature of the term "liturgical" since my colleagues often use this term to describe me as a dancer.

It is vital to move beyond the limited definitions that arise because of clichéd understandings of the East and the West. There is a need for a philosophical, educational theory that acknowledges Orientalism as defined by Edward Said (1935-2003), essentially the founding father of postcolonial studies. Orientalism occurs when a misrepresentation of religions and cultures creates false knowledge. According to Said[219], philosophical researchers should look at how other authors define the terms that they use in order to unpack Orientalist stereotypes, biases, and oversights that

marginalize and/or distort Eastern religious and cultural practices. Then, philosophical researchers can move towards a more pragmatic, humanistic approach to the relationship between the East and the West.

Said shows, throughout his work, how the terms used are vulnerable to the possibility of power manipulations that serve to conceal the complex nature of social realities and hide unequal power relationships. Unpacking these terms helps Said move from an Orientalist to a de-Orientalized theory of religious cultural interaction. With Said's need to de-Orientalize oversights that distort the East in mind, I focus on unpacking the term "liturgical" and whether or not this term is appropriate to define the embodied spirituality and dance form of Hindu dance. To accomplish this task, I apply Said's postcolonial theoretical framework to show why the term "liturgical" is problematic when describing Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance.

*Said's Postcolonial Theoretical Perspective on Terms*

Said states,

> "We need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate."[220]

Sometimes, the Orientalist does not even attempt to understand the true nature of the East. Unlike Said, I do not believe that this is always the case. For instance, I do feel that most of my colleagues try to portray the type of dancer I am in the best way possible based on their knowledge of words. I, as the dancer, appreciate that they equate me with liturgical dance, albeit I do not claim to be a liturgical dancer. I appreciate this because it shows that my colleagues accept me as a religious dancer as opposed to a mere dancer.

Though now, it behooves me to help my colleagues understand the postcolonial reality of using the term "liturgical" to describe me. Here, there is a gap between how viewers of the dance view me and how I view myself as a dancer. It is necessary for me to help my colleagues gain an understanding of who I am as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer.

I aim to de-Orientalize Orientalist interpretations of me as a dancer and prevent Orientalist agendas from thriving through the misrepresentation of the East that occurs when certain terminology is employed. This is important because of the colonial processes that influenced the development of language. Said states,

> "No emphasis was placed on the relationship between English and the colonial processes that brought the language and its literature to the Arab world."[221]

In the above quote, Said points out that the English language is a language that Easterners learned because of colonial processes. Said writes about his complex struggles with language in his memoir. He states,

> "The three languages became a pointedly sensitive issue for me at the age of fourteen. Arabic was forbidden and 'wog'; French was always 'theirs,' not mine; English was authorized, but unacceptable as the language of the hated British."[222]

Said indicates that language served to colonize the East. The terminological choices of words are not neutral but rather a powerful dynamic between the colonizer and the colonized. Said's native Arabic language was not accepted in the West. Furthermore, Said indicates that the French language did not feel like it belonged to the East. Said relates that he spoke English because it was authorized, yet Easterners seemed to hate the English language because they were forced to speak it. Evidently, there is a strong power dynamic present as Easterners were forced to learn the English language.

My personal history is similar to Said's in this sense. My ancestors, originally from India, were forced to learn English once they became indentured servants who worked on the plantations in Guyana located in South America. In fact, my parents were forced to learn English when they went to school as children in Guyana. My maternal and paternal grandparents struggled to keep the Hindi language alive as they taught my parents and many individuals to read, write, and speak basic Hindi. As my mother tells me, my family did not willingly wish to learn English but were forced. It was as if the British who ruled in Guyana at the time, only cared about "civilizing" savage Indians as upper class slaves to ensure verbal communication. Thus, I share Said's concerns about language, which has retained a power dynamic between the colonizer and the colonized. Nevertheless, as English speaking individuals, we understand that certain words in the English language have particular connotations.

While I acknowledge that I reap great benefits from speaking English, I am also aware that there are certain parts of Eastern religion and culture that the English language cannot accurately portray. For this reason, I propose that Westerners use some Eastern words when portraying the East. Westerners should use the words in a manner that allows the Eastern words to retain their history and meaning. The Eastern words, in a de-Orientalized sense, will then become part of a Western language that aims to adequately portray the East. Keep in mind that it is crucial to use the words in a de-Orientalized sense to prevent the terms from being co-opted for colonial purposes. In this case, it is my hope that people will refer to me as a "Kuchipudi Hindu dancer" rather than a "liturgical dancer".

Said continues to discuss the particularity of words as he writes,

> "The Orient was a word which later accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations, and that these did not necessarily refer to the real Orient but to the field of the surrounding word."[223]

I would like to draw a parallel between the way Said uses the word "Orient" in the above quote and the word "liturgical". From a postcolonial perspective on the one hand, those who use the word "liturgical" to describe Kuchipudi dance gives Kuchipudi dance a new representation. This representation does not depend on an accurate representation of the East, but rather relies on the West's inaccurate understanding of the East.

The word "liturgical" has certain "meanings, associations, and connotations" which does not reflect the true nature of Kuchipudi Hindu dance. By using the word "liturgical" to describe Kuchipudi Hindu dance, a new Orientalized history based on the "meanings, associations, and connotations" of liturgical dance is *given* to Kuchipudi dance. The term "liturgical" is an inadequate portrayal of Kuchipudi dance because the term "liturgical" displaces the actuality of Kuchipudi dance and causes the West to reflect itself. Essentially, this portrayal causes the cultural other of the Kuchipudi dancer to disappear as the West attempts to reach out to understand the East. Perhaps, it is safe to say that Kuchipudi dance is *like* liturgical dance but it is *not* liturgical dance because Kuchipudi dance has its own "meanings, associations, and connotations" based on its own history. From another perspective, on the other hand, it seems that "liturgical dance" is a term that serves as an umbrella for all forms of religious dance simply because the word "liturgical" implies "religious".

At this point, I turn to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*[224] for a working definition of the term liturgical. According to the dictionary, the term "liturgical" means "of or having the characteristics of liturgy." Near the entry for the term "liturgical", the dictionary lists "Other Christian Religious Terms" which include "Pentateuch, blasphemy, curate, doxology, eremite, iconoclasm, liturgy, orison, pneuma, reliquary." Even if the word "liturgy" is used to describe other religions, the dictionary implies that Christianity primarily dominates the word. This in itself makes me uncomfortable to use the word "liturgical" to describe me because I feel as if I am condoning further colonization. Now, I turn to relate the dictionary's definition of the word "liturgy"[225]. The word "liturgy" means "a Eucharistic rite". This description clearly refers to the Eucharist, which is a part of Christianity. The dictionary then goes on to say, "a customary repertoire of ideas, phrases, or observances" and then gives the example of "studying the *liturgies* of different religions". There is a hidden power dynamic here in the term "liturgical" and "liturgy". The dictionary primarily uses the terms "liturgical" and "liturgy" to first refer to Christianity. Then, it seems to indicate the willingness to share the terms with other religions that have a "customary repertoire of ideas, phrases, or observances." This implies that the terms "liturgy" and "liturgical" are primarily used as Christian terms. It seems that when individuals refer to liturgical dance, they mean "Christian liturgical dance," which begins as a genre of dance around the 1930s[226].

For the purpose of defining "liturgical dance", I turn to the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* where Johnson[227] states on page 387,

> "Liturgical dance, or dance specifically for worship, is a form of prayer in which the body is used as a vehicle for expression and communication. Sometimes

> dance can be done by one or a few dancers for the larger gathering. Other times, all people who are able to move are invited – and expected – to participate. Some dances are simple, such as procession dances that involve many people, often in a gathering or entrance right. Other dances, which proclaim or celebrate the gospel or take the form of an embodied prayer within a worship service, may include a select group of people dancing for the entire group. Meditation dances are often performed by one dancer or a few dancers for the rest of the congregation, who prayerfully reflect on the dance."

Johnson provides several components for liturgical dance. According to his definition, liturgical dance is "specifically for worship". This does not just mean worship on the part of the dancer. Johnson says that the viewers "prayerfully reflect on the dance". This means that the viewers also engage in worship with the dancer. Also, Johnson states, "all people who are able to move are invited – and expected – to participate," which further shows that all members of the congregation have the potential to use dance as a form of worship. Contrary to Kuchipudi Hindu dance, a liturgical dance education is not essential for the members of the congregation who dance. What is important is that these members move prayerfully as they use the body to worship. Gagne, Kane, & VerEecke state,

> "Liturgical dance must clearly be prayer and not performance. It is intended to involve all the participants in the ritual action. In ritual, there are no spectators; all participate."[228]

This confirms that liturgical dance is a ritual that involves prayer within a faith-based community. While I am a faith-based Hindu, I do not believe that all viewers of my dances engage in prayer as a ritual while I dance. Thus, I do not share this commonality with liturgical dancers.

Regardless of religious tradition, the term "liturgy" and "liturgical dance" implies that I as the dancer will bring the "congregants" closer to God. I do not believe that my

audience is all "congregants". If I engage in worship though dance, then this is a worship in which *I* engage. The audience might be congregants who engage in worship with me. However, they also may be atheists who do not believe in God but respect my faith-based belief as a Hindu dancer. Even if I bow while dancing, or I touch my head to the ground, or pray, or chant, I do not do so in a manner that engages in communal worship with the audience. The audience might choose to engage in worship with me or they may just enjoy observing my faith-based contemplative practices as a Hindu dancer. In sum, the term liturgy implies that the entire audience is a congregation of worshippers that pray with me as I dance in the hopes of moving closer to God. My audience of non-Hindus is not necessarily a congregation of people who worship with me in an attempt to move closer to God.

Evidently, the "liturgical dance tradition" of Christianity has a specific history, albeit very recent, that Hinduism and other religions do not completely share. This is one reason why I as a Hindu dancer prefer that my colleagues use the term "Hindu dancer" to describe me because it specifies who I am as a dancer. If they equate me as similar to a "Christian liturgical dancer", then they assume that Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance share a similar history. This description of me makes me feel that there is an attempt to colonize me because this description erases my identity as a Hindu dancer and imposes a new history of liturgical dance, based on Western expectations of religious dance, onto me as a dancer. Although this might seem like it would have a harsh effect on my body, I feel very calm because regardless of how people define me, it does not dismiss who I am – a Kuchipudi Indian classical *Hindu* dancer. Yet, I hope that my

colleagues will respect the distinctions that I make between Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dancer and consequently not equate me with Christian liturgical dance.

For the purposes of this analysis of liturgical dance, I develop a working definition for the term "liturgical dance" based on my readings of the literature. "Liturgical" dance is dance that pertains to worship that involves both the dancer and the viewers of the dance as religious participants. In other words, if the audience did engage in communal worship with me as the dancer, then there is the possibility that the term "liturgical" *might* be sufficiently used to describe Hindu dance. To continue, "liturgical dance" primarily is a Christian genre of dance that developed based on the Christian liturgy. While there are many unique differences between Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance, I will explore the main distinctions that arise in the development of each respective dance genre. Keep in mind that Hindu dance starts from a monistic perspective that unites the mind and body, whereas Christian liturgical dance starts with the acknowledgment of a dualistic view of the mind and body. Christian liturgical dance essentially aims to overcome the dualistic views of the body.

With these starting points in mind, first I relate the way dance developed in Hinduism and Christianity. Afterwards, I explore the colonial influences that Orientalize Hindu dance. Following this, I discuss the nature of religious support for each respective dance form. For the purposes of providing a de-Orientalized description of the education process of each dance form, I look at the pedagogy and curriculum of religious dance educators. To begin, I will now relate the differences in the development of dance. This is crucial because a de-Orientalized comprehension of how each respective dance style

developed will provide a historical understanding of each dance tradition. This prevents any Orientalized knowledge of artificial similarities and differences from further development.

*Differences in Development of Dance*

Here, I briefly introduce the differences in the development of Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. Keep in mind that some aspects of Hindu dance and Christian dance overlap. Therefore, there are some similarities among Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. However, the differences outweigh the similarities. My goal is to show how Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance have very distinct histories. Each respective dance form developed based on certain circumstances. For this reason, the two terms, albeit similar, have distinct connotations because of the dance tradition's development. Therefore, to say Kuchipudi Hindu dance is like Christian liturgical dance or Christian liturgical dance is Hindu dance is imprecise because the terms have distinct histories wrapped into the terminology.

First, I discuss the development of Hindu dance. The *Natya Shastra of Bharatamuni*[229], the ancient Hindu text about dance, which has been translated by the Board of Scholars, relates the creation of Indian classical Hindu dance. To begin with, according to Hinduism[230], there are four ages of this world. The first age is Satya yug (the age of truth and nobility); the second age is Treta yug (the silver age); the third age is Dwapara yug (the age of Shri Krishna); and the fourth age is Kali yug (the dark age). During the age of Treta yug, humankind started to enjoy the material aspects of this world more than the divine aspects. Consequently, the devas (demi Gods) approached

Bramhaji (the creator according to Hinduism) with a request to create something to help humankind maintain the traditional aspects of Hinduism while also enjoying their time within the world.

In other words, there was a need to maintain morality while also taming the senses. The senses have the potential to influence a sense of divinity or indulgences that decrease spiritual well-being. For example, while the dancers are dressed like queens, princesses, and divine servants, they are not to be looked upon with a lustful eye. The dancer is a devadasi (servant of Supreme Being) who seeks to relate the epics of Hinduism through dance. Even during the bodily movement of the dance, the dancer seeks to engage in a divine experience where a heavenly aura surrounds the performance as the performer and the viewers engage in a divine connection because of the tamed senses.

To continue with the creation of Hindu dance, the devas wanted morality but with divinity present among the five senses. With this request in mind, Bramhaji decided to create the art of dance for humankind, celestial beings, and demons to enjoy.

The ancient text of Nandikeshwara as translated by P.S. Apparao states,

> "Brahma extracted Pathyam from Rgveda, Abhinayas from Yajurveda, Ganam from Samaveda and Rasas from Atharwanaveda and composed this sastra i.e. N.S. which bestows Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, the four principal objects of human existence."[231]

In Hinduism, a monistic religion, the many emerge from a Supreme Being. Bramhaji, Vishnuji, and Shivaji are known as the Trinity in Hinduism. Bramhaji creates while Vishnuji sustains and Shivaji destroys. The above quote indicates that Bramhaji took specific parts from the four main Vedas (religious authoritative texts) in Hinduism

as Bramhaji created the *Natya Shastra*, which is known as the Hindu Veda of dance. Bramhaji took Pathyam, which is the element of drama from the Rgveda. The component of Abhinayas, or gestural and facial expressions, came from the Yajurveda. Gitam or Ganam, as the author states above, is singing that comes from the Samaveda. Rasas, the sentiments of dance, is from the Atharwanaveda. Bramhaji, the great creator of Hinduism, created the *Natya Shastra* as an authoritative text of dance. Bramhaji then instructed the intelligent Sage Bharata to complete the *Natya Shastra*. Sage Bharatamuni is the credited author of the *Natya Shastra*. Bramhaji instructed Sage Bharata to teach the form of Indian classical Hindu dance to worthy disciples. Through dance, individuals attain Dharma (morality), Artha (wealth), Kama (worldly pleasures) and Moksha (liberation). Thus, the human existence attains fulfillment in this world and also on a spiritual level.

The *Natya Shastra* discusses the religious ethics of dance and the dancer as a part of Hinduism. In fact, in ancient times, dancers were called Devadasis, which means servants of the lord. Specifically, for instance, the *Natya Shastra*[232] discusses puja (religious worship) of the stage before the dance performance begins. This is because the dancer invites One Supreme Being to manifest in different forms to protect the stage and guard the dancer. It is important to note that while Hinduism is a monistic religion, many sects of Hinduism believe in various forms of a divine being.[233] In other words, from One Supreme Being, many demi-Gods emerge. To continue, puja is a ritual that involves the self-purification of the mind through a focus on God. Those who perform puja should prepare to perform the ritual by maintaining a distance from unholy aspects of the world.

Before I dance in any theatrical events, I pray through the medium of a puja on the stage. Sometimes, the curtains are closed whereas at other times there are a few people sitting in the theatre seats. The point is that the puja needs to be done on the stage before the dancer begins a theatrical. Before I performed in *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance*[234] at Montclair State University on April 21, 2013, I prayed during a Havan (simple puja) on the stage with a Brahman student-pandit, who is also my nephew, Narendra Rudra Misir. As we prayed, I asked One Supreme Being to manifest in different forms to guard the stage and protect me as I danced. I felt that I was encircled by protection from the Supreme Being and blessed as a dancer. I also prayed to my departed ancestors and asked for their souls to bless me as I danced. It felt as if my father's soul came from Indralok (heaven) dressed in white clothing with a sacred red thread on his right wrist sitting in a lotus position center stage near the spotlights on the ceiling blessing me as I danced. I sensed my father's soul with my inner eye as I felt that his soul gained moksha through the performance. In addition, I also sensed the spiritual presence of my maternal grandparents, whom I was very close to as a child, and my Aunt Surujmokie (Baby) Persaud. It was as if a selected handful of my ancestors blessed me to fulfill my purpose as a dancer. This powerful connection to a Supreme Being and to my ancestors developed through the traditional puja that dancers perform on the stage before dancing.

Brahman student-pandit Narendra Rudra Misir, who is also my nephew, leads me in prayer through the medium of a Havan (simple puja) in Memorial Auditorium on the stage before I performed in *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance* at Montclair State University in April 2013.

Vidyarthi,[235] a contemporary Eastern scholar of Hinduism, states that those who perform puja should fast (eat no meat or seafood) and also should free oneself of evil intentions. Those who perform puja with evil intentions to cause harm to others perform a tainted puja that is not considered holy. Vidyarthi[236] continues to state that puja is a ritual performed by a Brahman pandit (priest of nobility). The pandit first asks the devotees (performers of puja) to purify the body internally through sipping water and touching the various parts of the body with holy water. After, the pandit invokes the various forms of the Gods and Goddess into the murtis (holy brass images in many cases). Then, the pandit guides the devotees to focus on a particular form of the divine being. The devotees bathe the image, decorate the image with scents and clothing, as well as offer flowers and fruit. After dancers perform puja with whole-hearted intentions, the dancers are ready to relate the discourses of Hinduism through the art of dance.

This is the reason why traditional Hindu dance recitals begin with the dance known as *Pushpanjali*. In *Pushpanjali*, the dancer offers flowers on stage to Shri Ganesha as the dancer prays for the Supreme Being to bless all aspects of the performance.[237] Shri Ganesha is the son of Shivaji and Parvati Maa.[238] Shri Ganesha has

an elephant trunk and elephant ears. His elephant head represents knowledge whereas his elephant trunk represents the manner in which he destroys obstacles. Shri Ganesha sweeps away negativity with his long elephant trunk as he uses his intellect. Similarly, Hindu dancers pray to Shri Ganesha to bless them with knowledge and the ability to humbly destroy obstacles in the way of the performance or that are a part of the performance.

When I danced *Pushpanjali* at *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance*[239], I prayed sincerely for One Supreme Being to manifest in the form of Shri Ganesha to sweep away all obstacles in the way of the performance. I also prayed for Shri Ganesha to destroy all obstacles within my being to help me fulfill my purpose as a Hindu dancer. As I danced the *Pushpanjali*, it was as if Shri Ganesha swept the stage of all obstacles to sanctify it as a Holy place for me to embody Hinduism through the medium of dance. I felt that Shri Ganesh blessed my entire being, which caused my whole body to fill with a powerful Shakti (divine power) that emulated, like cosmic rays, through every pore of my body in a manner that extended out to the world at large and even out onto the Montclair State University campus. Through this feeling, I realized that my body movement throughout my entire life has the capacity to stay filled with a Shakti (divine power) that helps to guide me through the ocean of life. This Shakti (divine power), that develops based on the ancient tradition of Hindu dance, still is with me even though the event was in 2013.

While the religious tradition of Indian classical Hindu dance developed in the ancient times of Hinduism with a particular set of religious ethics and as a method to tame the senses of the human body, the liturgical dance tradition of Christianity

developed in the modern era. Although Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968), an American dance pioneer, was not considered a "liturgical dancer" by many but rather remembered as a dancer who focused on Oriental themes, St. Denis influenced the theoretical framework of Christian liturgical dance. DeSola emphasizes this as she writes,

> "Ruth St. Denis reflected that a sacred dancer's training was twofold; the dancer must train not only the body, but also be concerned with the development of the spirit. St. Denis can be considered a 'foremother' of liturgical dance, having performed as early as 1910 at the Riverside Church, New York City." [240]

While DeSola does not seem to claim that the form of liturgical dance starts with St. Denis, De Sola evidently claims that St. Denis is a "foremother" of liturgical dance. St. Denis lived during 1879-1968, which is during today's modern era. St Denis used sacred dance to unite the mind and spirit as a component of what is now known as Christian liturgical dance. As she did this, she started to create a framework for Christian liturgical dance. This fairly recent framework develops based on the sacred dances from India that St. Denis encountered when she visited the East. Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona write,

> "Modern dance pioneers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn made overt religious subject matter a focus for their dances in the early twentieth century when that period's ballet had given such themes scant attention. Shawn's ministry was already moving from the church to the stage by 1911 when he saw St. Denis dance in Denver. Her performance convinced him that religion, dance, and drama could be combined. While she stressed sacred dances from India, albeit in a loose manner, he introduced numerous dances with Hebrew and Christian scriptural themes." [241]

The creation of Christian liturgical dance starts to emerge with a form based on Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn who were inspired by the sacred dances of India. Here, it is evident that the sacred dances from India influenced St. Denis's development of

"sacred dance". Ted Shawn, a famous American dance pioneer influenced by St. Denis, introduced Hebrew and scriptural themes to Christian liturgical dance. I chose to briefly discuss Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn since they were known as the first pioneers of American dance.

My point here is to show the distinction between the creation of dance in Hinduism versus the development of dance in Christianity. To summarize, the form of Indian classical Hindu dance is rooted in the ancient times and ancient texts of Hinduism. There is a specific ethic for dance in Hinduism. On the contrary, Christian liturgical dance, albeit found in biblical references, took form as a recognized dance tradition in modern day. Unlike Hindu dance, there are no particular ancient religious texts for Christian liturgical dance. While Hindu dancers adhere to a Hindu dance ethic as stated in the ancient Hindu texts, Christian liturgical dancers develop their own code of ethics since it does not come explicitly from a religious text. I do not claim that the dance ethics of Christian liturgical dancers are not inspired by religious texts. Rather, I claim that Christianity does not have a religiously accepted scriptural text across Christendom that relates Christian liturgical dance ethics.

My interest here was to provide a de-Orientalized description of the development of Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. It is my hope that this description helps to build a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. I now move onto relate how Hindu dance became Orientalized when the public used Orientalized knowledge with an artificial knowledge of Hindu dance to cause Orientalism to thrive.

*Orientalization of Hindu Dance*

Evidently, Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance developed in distinct ways based on their own unique histories. Because dance developed differently within the sphere of Hindu dance and the sphere of Christian liturgical dance, the West and the East each have a different perspective about what dance is. The West imposed its own view of dance onto the East during colonization. This is crucial to mention because it shows how the West dominated the East by forcing the East to develop certain frameworks for dance. Even though we live in a postcolonial era today, the residual effects of colonization are evident in the East's development of dance in Bollywood, which is an Eastern form of Hollywood. The West Orientalized the East, which in turn, caused the East to Orientalize itself. I aim to show how Hindu dance differs from Western views of dance and aim to return Hindu dance back to a divine form of dance. To accomplish this task, I will now briefly discuss the history of the Hindu dance tradition known as Kathak. My unnerving goal here is to show how the West Orientalized the Kathak dance tradition of Hinduism.

Kathak is a dance form in the North Indian classical Hindu dance tradition that the West Orientalizes. The history of the Kathak dance tradition has roots in Hinduism. The Bhakti Movement of the medieval time period incorporated Kathak as a means to demonstrate the movement's interests in moving away from a caste-based, ritualistic practice of Hinduism. Kathak dances were performed to the songs of great saint poets of the Bhakti Movement such as Mirabai and Surdas.[242] However, there was once again a

change as the Kathak dance tradition went from sacred to profane because of Orientalization.

> "The suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny by the British in 1857 accelerated the decline of the kingdom in North India. The demise of the princely states also obliterated the wealthy, art-loving gentry. The Cantonment Act of 1864 arbitrarily relocated the dancers to bazaars outside the cities for entertainment of soldiers. This resulted in musicians and dancers being uprooted from North Indian cities and migrating to Calcutta, the new capital of the British Raj, in search of patrons. The city thus became the prime destination for dancers and musicians from the North, who found new sources of patronage among the Bengali elite."[243]

Here, we have the beginning of the Orientalization of Indian classical Hindu dance. The British did not know the literature of the dance tradition, history of the dance tradition, or the depth and meaning behind the dances. To them, the dance was foreign and exotic. Thus, they enjoyed entertainment by the dancers. The dancers no longer danced to unite with the divine, but rather dancers danced in servitude to the British. The dance became what the British wanted it to become. In other words, it was Orientalized based on the Western's view of what the dance should be. The British enforced the knowledge they constructed of the dance through education and laws in the political sphere. The people of India had no choice but to comply with the laws of the political sphere despite their religious beliefs.

> "For both the English missionaries and the Hindu reformist sect, Indian eroticism was the cause of immorality. All traditional cultural practices, therefore, needed to be revamped for purification and national regeneration. The banning of "indecent" literature, poetry and songs that began with Britain's Obscenity Act of 1857 culminated in the banning of other 'sinful practices' like devadasi and nautch. The banning of regimental bazaars where soldiers found pleasures from native women like the nautch girls was aided by Britain's Contagious Disease Act of 1864 made it usual for officials to randomly harass nautch girls for medical examinations as venereal diseases rose among British soldiers during this time. The popularity of the nautch girls among British soldiers made the former easy

> targets for such harassment. One must remember that it had been an official policy after the Mutiny of 1857 to select healthy and beautiful 'specimens' among the courtesans and relocate them arbitrarily for the entertainment of soldiers."[244]

As the British colonized and Orientalized India, the dance girls at bazaars who entertained soldiers transformed from healthy, beautiful girls, to unhealthy girls probably because of the stress of being objectified. There are implications that many females forcefully became prostitutes. Disease began to spread among the dancers. The British implemented another set of laws to ban dance and indecent literature. Sadly, the British misrepresented the dance and the literature, and thus did India a great disservice due to Orientalization. Here, the tradition of dance and literature becomes corrupted with worldly pleasures as opposed to representative of the traditions of Hinduism. Evidently, the West and the East have a different perspective on the purposes of dance. In turn, this influences the history of dance in the West and the East as well as impacts on the role of dance in religion.

While the British once forcefully Orientalized Hindu dance during the era of colonization, Orientalization still has the potential to occur. This will happen if Hindu dance does not maintain Hindu traditions, but rather imposes the form of Christian liturgical dance or other non-Hindu theoretical dance frameworks onto Hindu dance. For instance, contemporary Indian movies in Bollywood (the Indian version of Hollywood) Orientalizes Hindu dance in many cases. Hindu dance has a specific theoretical framework to operate within just as Christian liturgical dance has a separate, distinct framework to work out of. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge the separate theoretical frameworks of each respective dance tradition and refrain from imposing one

framework onto the other. With the different theoretical frameworks of dance in mind, I now discuss support for dance from religious authorities.

*Support From Religious Authorities*

While Hindu dance is supported by traditional religious leaders of Hinduism, Christian liturgical dance does not receive the same traditional religious support. The lack of religious support for Christian liturgical dance may be due to the usage of dance in pagan theatres and also the style of dance.[245] Overall, early Christian thinkers such as St. Paul and St. Augustine viewed the body suspiciously as a potential locus of evil.[246] Adams writes,

> "Basil the Great (c. 329-379), Bishop of Caesarea…. proceeded to attack individual dance performed by women as it distracted the attention of the men who sat and watched in church. John Chrysostem (345-407), Bishop of Constantinople, blessed the performance of the ring dances while he censored those who through excess engaged in the individual dance." [247]

Adams refers to Basil the Great, one of the prominent defenders of the Church who battled against fourth century heresies. Basil the Great believed women who dance distract men probably because he thought that men do not have tamed senses. Similarly, the Bishop of Constantinople, another prominent figure of the Church, censored individual dance probably for similar reasons and allowed communal ring dances because they did not seem to provacatize the body as much. This is a major distinction between Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. Hindu dance was created to tame the five senses of the body. The body is not sinful but rather is a vehicle for human existence. In essence, Hinduism acknowledges that there are bodily pleasures that humans encounter by their very existence. Hindu dance was created as a way to tame the bodily pleasures

in a divine way that allows the enjoyment of wealth and bodily desires/pleasures in a manner that adheres to morality and leads to liberation. On the contrary, Christianity seems to battle against the bodily pleasures that arise in individuals. There is not a focus on taming the senses but rather a focus on censoring the pleasures that the senses have the ability to stimulate.

In fact, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Christian churches did not permit Christian liturgical dance as part of the liturgy. The disconnection between Christian liturgical dancers and the liturgy caused Christian liturgical dance to take on a life of its own in its own part of the religious sphere. Because of the lack of guidance from religious leaders, I feel Christian liturgical dancers sometimes used their creative ability insensitively as they developed something *new* in the pedagogical space of hybridity. For example, Apostolos-Cappadona[248] mentions the Christian liturgical dances of the *Embattled Garden*. This Christian liturgical dance performance deals with the classical interpretation of the virgin and the whore on stage. Being the whore, accomplishes what the Catholic Church feared. It moves dance from sacred to profane. It becomes the profane *in* the sacred. The support or lack of support of religious authorities influences the pedagogy and curriculum of each respective dance tradition. Since Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance maintain different theoretical frameworks, I will now discuss pedagogy and curriculum within dance.

*Pedagogy and Curriculum*

Hindu dance adheres to a specific curriculum that emerges based on the ancient Hindu texts of dance. Since I am a Kuchipudi Indian Classical Hindu dancer, I

specifically describe the pedagogy and curriculum within the Kuchipudi Hindu dance form. Devi focuses on Kuchipudi in the following quote.

> "Kuchipudi, is a dance style, which has all the salient features of Classical dance system. It strictly follows Bharata's Natyashastra and Nandikeshwara's Abhinaya Darpanam, the authorities and ancient treatise on dance, which are the main sources for all the Indian classical dance traditions. The Kuchipudi dance-drama tradition is strictly based on the principles of the Natya Shastra and has a great historical background and cultural heritage dating back to centuries."[249]

There is a deep sense of religious history intertwined with Hindu dance. Shri Bramha, the creator in Hinduism, created dance with specific components that are meant to tame the human body to ensure a fruitful human existence. Shri Bramha then requested Sage Bharata to complete the *Natya Shastra*[250], the text about the ethic of Hindu dance, which explains the Hindu dance curriculum. Thus, the tradition of Kuchipudi Hindu dance has a very specific curriculum that develops within traditional Hinduism as opposed to outside of Hinduism. The major Kuchipudi dance items in the curriculum[251] include:

> *Pushpanjali* – This is an invocational dance to Shri Ganesha who is the remover of obstacles. The dancer asks for blessings throughout life and asks Shri Ganesha to provide the dancer with knowledge.
> *Tarijem* – This is a beginner's dance that teaches the dancer a sequence of dance steps.
> *Sabdam* – This type of dance uses gestures and facial expressions to relate hero-heroine relationships in Hinduism. There is intricate footwork in this dance.
> *Shiva Kriti* – This dance is in praise of Shivaji, the Hindu God of dance.
> *Bhama Kalapam* – This famous repertoire relates the distress of Satyabhama, the wife of Shri Krishna. Satyabhama yearns for the love of Shri Krishna, an incarnation of a Supreme Being in Hinduism.
> *Tarangam* – This dance relates the meditative element of dance. After relating the narratives of Hinduism, the dancer engages in meditation as the dancer unites the mind and body. The dancer balances a pot of water on the head to signify the heavy responsibilities of life while dancing on the rims of a brass plate to signify the bond to the Earth.
> *Tillana* – This is a fast dance sequence of sculpture-ous poses.

> *Mangalam* – This dance thanks the One Supreme Being of Hinduism, who emerges in many forms, to protect and bless the dancer and viewers of the performance.

The education system of Hindu dance is based on the ancient Guru/Shishya (teacher-student) philosophy. Guru[252] is a Hindu term that refers to the manner in which a spiritual teacher removes darkness from the soul. Here, I do not refer to the traditional Guru Diksha Sanskaar[253] where Hindu children become the disciples of revered Gurujis who are usually pandits (priests). According to Hinduism, the Hindu dancer needs to have a primary Guru[254], such as a pandit, saint, or sage, who is well versed in Hindu scriptures and puja. The dance Guru is a secondary Guru who helps the Hindu dancer learn the Hindu scriptures and build a direct connection to the Supreme Being through the medium of Hindu dance. Before Hindu dance Gurus teach Hindu dance, the student must accept the dance Guru as a life long teacher and the dance Guru needs to also accept the student as a life long disciple. Through this life-long relationship, the Guru helps the shishya (student) to remove the darkness from their soul and engage in a consistent experience with the Supreme Being through the dance that moves the dancer's soul towards moksha (liberation).

Hindu dancers focus more on their phenomenological experience and spiritual self-development. While the audience plays an important role, the audience does not need to engage in communal worship with the dancer. Some viewers might have a religious experience whereas others might have an aesthetic experience, while some might have a different type of experience. As a Hindu dancer, I aim to engage in religious and cultural sharing, which does not require the audience to engage in

communal worship with me as a dancer. This is quite different from Christian liturgical dance that seems to be more of a missionary dance genre when compared to Hindu dance.

To continue, DeSola urges liturgical dancers to think of a liturgical pedagogy as well as a liturgical curriculum as she writes,

> "A *theory* of liturgical dance considers the role of the dancer in the liturgical community; the role of dance in the liturgical structure, including the varieties of religious themes which may be danced; and the communal nature or dimension of dance and worship. The *practice* of liturgical dance may be divided into the preparation of the dancer and community and the shared experience of the liturgical dancer and the community during the liturgy. In the context of dance as religious studies, special attention is given to two components of the preparation of the liturgical dancer: the practice of embodying and dancing prayers and the use of dance in the study of biblical passages. Both of these underline the presupposition that we *learn* by dancing. Further, both elements are ideally part of the preparation and training of a liturgical dancer and choreographer. Both of them in their own right, are valuable practices for religious studies, and may be done independent of liturgical consideration."[255]

DeSola distinguishes between the theory and practice of liturgical dance. In theory, liturgical dancers have a role to fulfill as a part of a liturgical community within a liturgical structure. Also, there is a communal nature that links dance to worship. In practice, the Christian liturgical dancers need to learn to embody prayers and dance biblical passages while the liturgical community prepares to have a liturgical dance experience by studying biblical passages. DeSola continues to state,

> "The dancer's essence is founded on a unity of body, mind, and spirit. The intuitive, nonverbal faculties receive the sources of inspiration that lead the dancer to express interpretations or restatements of ancient or modern concepts, freshened as they were by the spirit. The ministry of the sacred dancer is multifaceted. At times, the dancer serves as 'teacher,' 'prophet,' 'gatherer,' 'evangelist', 'witness', and 'priest.' These roles are part of the dancer's contribution to the liturgy and the community."[256]

The Christian liturgical dancer's body, mind, and spirit unite as the dancer expresses an interpretation or restatement of scriptures and/or concepts. In this sense, the Christian liturgical dancer becomes a minister that serves as a "teacher, prophet, gatherer, evangelist, witness, and priest". DeSola emphasizes the communal nature of the Christian community with the emphasized focus on the congregation.

> "As a communal form of worship, liturgical dance offers a renewed awareness of who these people are as a community. When bodies sway in unison, and arms lift in prayer, the congregation can become conscious, in an experiential way through the workings of the spirit, that they are a living, breathing family of God."[257]

In the above quote, it seems that Christian liturgical dancers are ministers who lead the congregation in a communal form of worship through dance. Bodies sway and arms lift in prayer as Christian liturgical dancers and the congregation unites as a family of God. This emphasis on community is important to acknowledge in the tradition of Christian liturgical dance. DeSola relates the categories of liturgical dance in the following quote.

> "Liturgical dance can fall into five different categories: processional, prayer (including acclamation and invocation), proclamation, meditation, and celebration."[258]

The mentioned categories pertain to the liturgy and the relationship between the Christian liturgical dancer and the liturgical community. While there is not strict curriculum for Christian liturgical dancers, there seems to be a structure to Christian liturgical dance in the sense that there needs to be a relationship between the Christian liturgical dancer and the liturgy. Even if the Christian liturgical dancer performs on stage and not in churches as part of the liturgy, it seems that the Christian liturgical dancer's aim is to spread the word of Christianity for Christians or those who wish to convert to Christianity. This differs from my goal as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer. I do not wish to

spread the word of Hinduism in a faith-based manner for Hindus or those who wish to convert to Hinduism. Rather, my aim is to educate viewers of the dance about Hinduism in a de-Orientalized manner. While I am a Hindu who deeply believes in Hinduism, I do not wish to impose my faith in Hinduism onto others nor do I wish to encourage viewers of the dance to convert to Hinduism. As a Hindu dancer, I hope to endorse a de-Orientalized knowledge development of Hinduism and reject an artificial, Orientalized development of Hinduism that will cause Orientalism to thrive. Thus, these goals differ from those of Christian liturgical dancers.

I do not claim that Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers must stay within the boundaries of each respective dance tradition. What I am saying is that there are certain religious and ethical guidelines, albeit strict or seemingly not strict, for each respective dance tradition. To Orientalize either dance tradition causes religious disrespect and Orientalism to thrive. Even though Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance are two distinct dance forms, it is imperative to think about how to reconcile the dance forms in a manner that does not Orientalize either dance form or show any insensitivity.

*Hybridity: Contemplative Spiritual Dance*

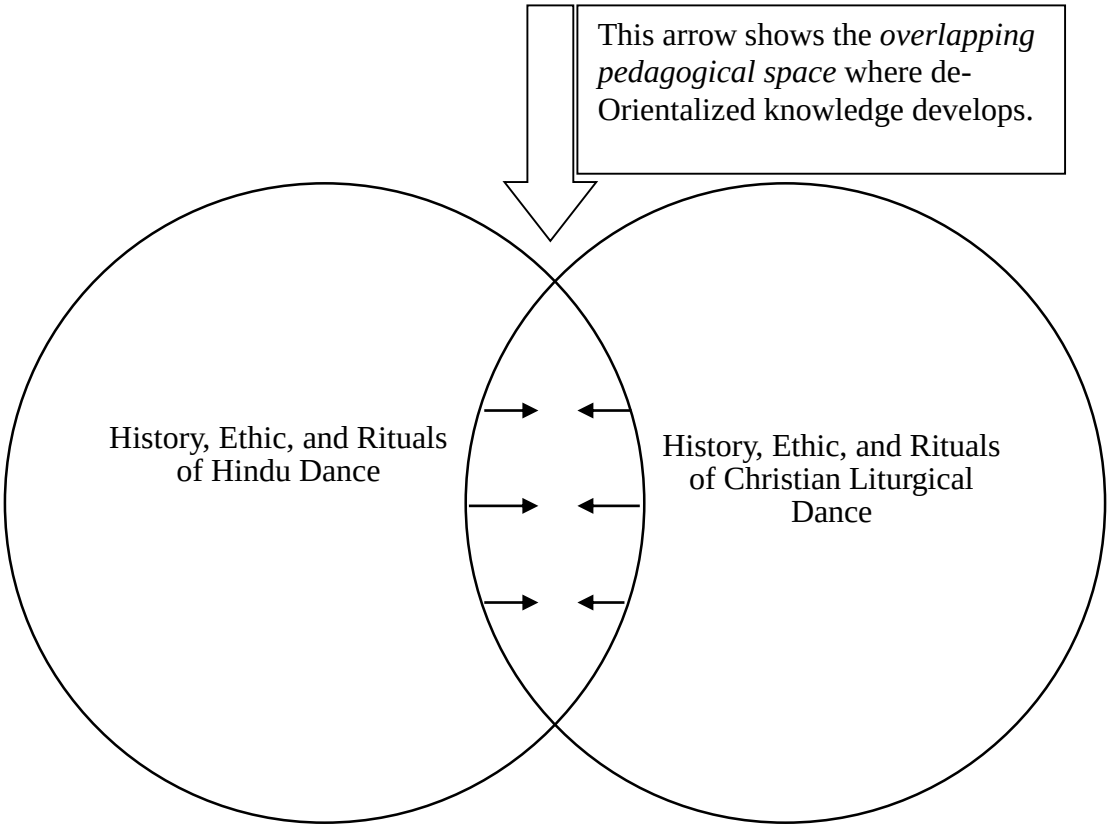
It is imperative to think about how to develop something *new* as a way to reconcile Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers. Here, in the pedagogical space of hybridity, I turn to Homi Bhabha[259], a postcolonial scholar influenced by the work of Franz Fanon and Edward Said. Bhabha writes about the importance of negotiating boundaries.

> "What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, *contingently*, 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference – be it class, gender or race. Such assignations of social differences – where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between* – find their agency in a form of 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present."[260]

Homi Bhabha indicates in the above quote that identities stimulate a need to negotiate in spaces that will result in the remaking of boundaries. There is a call to expose the limitations of the East and the West in an effort to acknowledge the space *in-between* that interconnects the past traditions and history, with the present and the future. This call exists because we do not just live in a Western world or an Eastern world, but rather we live as a part of humanity in *a* world. While it is crucial to maintain fidelity to each respective dance tradition, it is also imperative to acknowledge that there is an urgent need for unity. This goal of unity should aim to move beyond mere tolerance for each respective dance tradition and towards a genuine understanding that appreciates each tradition. When this occurs, dancers can unite to dance together in a manner that is sensitive to Orientalism and colonizing agendas. As I think about this pedagogical concern, I consider it necessary to develop something *new* in a pedagogical space of hybridity.

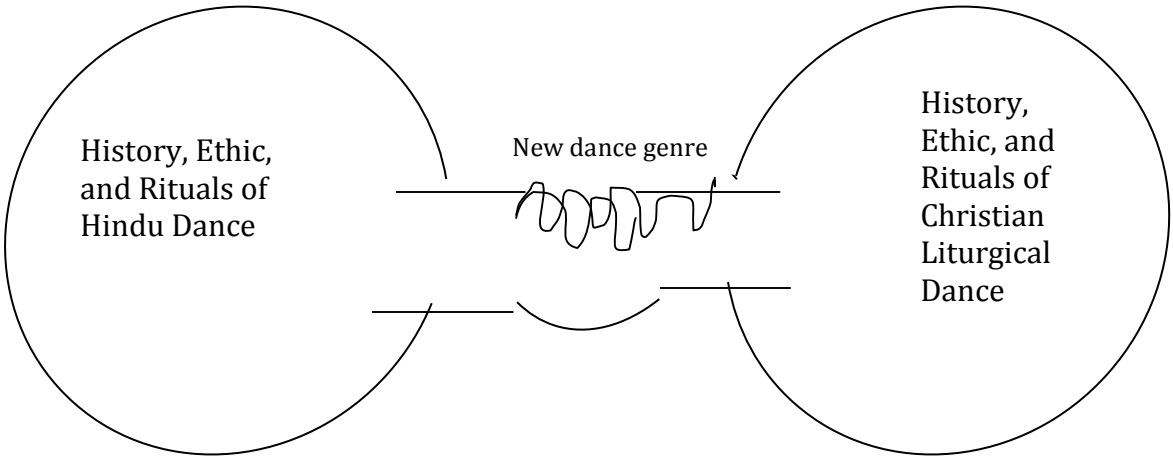
Unfortunately, the pedagogical space of hybridity may become defective if I do not first return back to an overlapping pedagogical space. To this extent, I think of Hindu dance in one sphere and Christian liturgical dance in another sphere since each respectively has distinct histories and theoretical frameworks for dance. Before moving

into a pedagogical space of hybridity, Hindu dancers need to maintain a de-Orientalized understanding of Christian liturgical dance and Christian liturgical dancers need to maintain a de-Orientalized understanding of Hindu dance. While the West and the East do not maintain equal power dynamics in the world, I chose to use the same size circles to portray the Hindu dance of the East and the Christian liturgical dance of the West because it is my hope that dancers will view each other respectively without maintaining an "us as better than them" mentality.

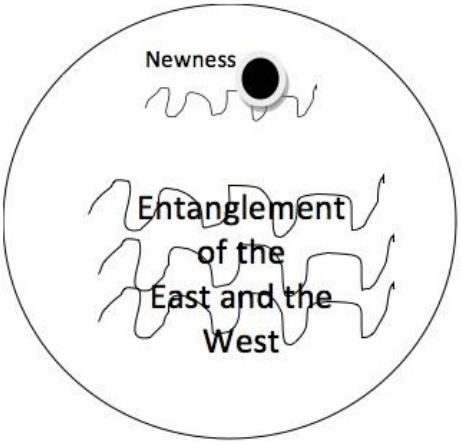



It is my hope that Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers will meet in the overlapping pedagogical space to engage in a de-Orientalization that aims to correct any misrepresentations or misinterpretations of each respective dance form. There needs to

be a de-Orientalized understanding of what constitutes Hindu dance and what makes up the form of Christian liturgical dance. Once this de-Orientalization occurs, then Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers could meet in a pedagogical space of hybridity to think about a new form of dance that shows sensitivity for both Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. This new form of dance should not misrepresent either Hindu dance or Christian liturgical dance because the new dance form should be neither Hindu nor Christian. To this extent, I suggest dancers reconcile to develop a *new* dance genre in the pedagogical space of hybridity as a medium that has the potential to bring Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers together in a spiritual manner that remains sensitive to each respective dance form.




Once Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers meet in the pedagogical space of hybridity, then they become entangled with one another. Essentially, they merge together with sensitivity for each respective tradition. It is my hope that something new will develop in the pedagogical space of hybridity once Christian liturgical dancers and Hindu dancers become entangled.




Here, I propose a possible reconciliation for Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers. This solution is a new form of dance, which I call *contemplative spiritual dance*. I do not use the term "contemplative dance" in the sense that refers to the many contemplative dance movements in existence. Rather, I use the term *contemplative spiritual dance* to refer to a new genre of dance as opposed to a dance movement. In this genre of dance, Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers can come together to share each respective tradition in a manner that remains sensitive for each tradition and develops new guidelines for a new genre of dance. Perhaps, contemplative spiritual dance should aim to teach about religion as opposed to mandatorily enforce religious practice. While contemplative spiritual dance has the ability to be sacred, the goal in the pedagogical space of hybridity is to teach one another with a de-Orientalized sensitivity and come together to dance whether we are theists or atheists.

As a Hindu dancer, I personally struggle with maintaining Hindu dance ethics while sharing the form of Hindu dance with those who desire to learn. I plan to use a

*contemplative spiritual dance* framework, which I am currently developing, to engage in a dance practice with non-Hindus. In this form of dance, I bring my own history as a Kuchipudi Hindu dancer together with dancers who have their own histories within dance. As an educator who employs a self-study methodology, I think about the common goals I share with other dancers in a manner that appropriates as opposed to misappropriates the respective dance traditions. I facilitate a philosophical discussion with other dancers as I ask important questions such as:

- As a viewer and/or participant, how can we show sensitivity for each respective dance form?
- As a viewer and/or participant, how do we ensure that we do not misrepresent each respective dance form?
- If we participate in each other's dance form, then how do we respect the particular dance tradition's ethics while remaining faithful to our own dance form?
- How do we move beyond mere tolerance and move towards a genuine appreciation for each respective dance form?

The above questions provide an example of the philosophical dialogue that should occur in a space of hybridity as Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers discuss a *contemplative spiritual dance form*. With a *contemplative spiritual dance* theoretical framework in mind, I do not aim to teach dance students to convert to Hinduism, but rather aim to teach *about* Hinduism. Similarly, Christian liturgical dancers may wish to use a *contemplative spiritual dance* theoretical framework to teach about the liturgy as opposed to an evangelical art form that seeks to convert non-Christians to Christianity.

*Choreography Experience in the Space of Hybridity*

As mentioned before, this chapter was published in an earlier form in the *Journal of Research on Christian Education*. Karen Pechilis, a religious studies professor from Drew University located in Madison, New Jersey, read the article. Pechilis requested me

to lead an interactive workshop where students and I could meet together in a space of hybridity to engage in *contemplative spiritual dance* as I theoretically related in the article. I faced the daunting challenge of choreographing a dance piece that I could share secularly with the participants but also needed to remain in fidelity to the ethic of Hindu dance because I am a Hindu dancer.

When I presented the *Interactive Workshop on Classical Dance of India*[261] at Drew University, I started the presentation by sharing a comparative analysis of Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance in an effort to help the participants maintain a de-Orientalized framework of each respective tradition. After, I explained how I developed the choreography for the workshop in the pedagogical space of hybridity. I expressed that I developed the choreography with sensitivity to the participants in mind and with respect for Hindu dance. As I thought about the choreography, I positioned myself on the historic Drew University campus, which I often visit to conduct research and enjoy mindful walking on the campus trails. I realized that the sun, the moon, the sky, and the stars are all a part of the world's ornaments that all of humanity shares regardless of religious background. With this commonality in mind, I developed a dance meditation that honors the world's ornaments through bodily movement to an Indian classical instrumental piece. This dance meditation is neither Hindu dance nor liturgical dance. However, I danced the meditation piece as a Hindu dancer because I am a Hindu dancer. Yet, if I had to label the dance piece, I would not call it Hindu dance because most of the participants danced the piece as a secular meditative piece. I would call this dance *A Meditation to the World's Ornaments*. This is a dance choreography that we all can

enjoy regardless of our body type, body capacity, or movement coordination. It is a dance piece that focuses on loving ourselves and developing a direct connection with the Earth that we live on in an effort to honor the ornaments of the world. To press this point, I will share parts of my self-study journal entry about this event.

> "Before, during, and after the event, I felt interconnected to the historic Drew University campus and the world. Karen Pechilis and I walked from the Faulkner House to Crawford Hall at around 6:30 p.m. We enjoyed a mindful walk as we admired the tall, strong, towering trees that seemed rooted in the past. The trees seemed to make note of the present moment and had eyes for the future. We heard crickets chirping as the sun started to set." [262]

As I walked, I felt that I was dancing although I was walking. I realized that life itself is a dance with every movement I make, every facial expression, every extension of me that I spread into the world. This was a space of hybridity for me where the false illusions of the East and the West faded, as I felt interconnected to the past, present, and future in a manner that moved past pretentious boundaries. The nature around me reminded me that no matter where I am geographically in the world, who I am as a female Hindu dancer extends outwards. Moreover, Hinduism lives not just as a historical religion, but resides in my heart. For example, as I walked with the tall, towering, trees surrounding me, I remembered the historical *Ramayana*[263] and Shri Rama's time spent in the forest. I felt love for Shri Rama and Sita Maa in my heart as a Hindu. I do not need to venture on Hindu pilgrimages to gain a spiritual focus to inspire a transformation within me. My pilgrimage is all the places that I travel in my life as a Hindu.

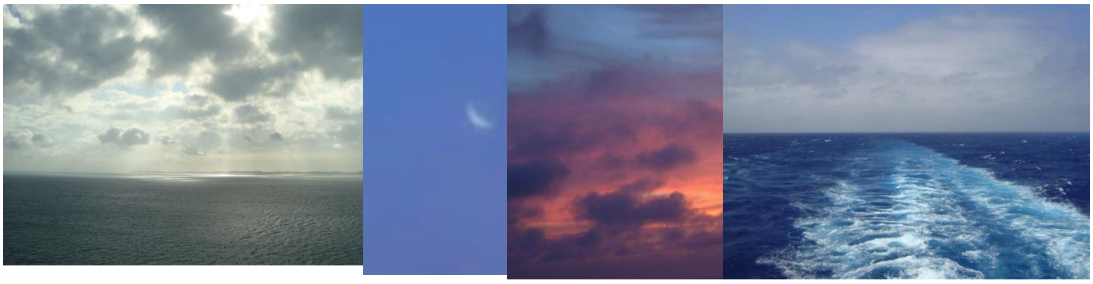
> "The workshop session was broken into a few parts. As I prepared for the workshop, I played the Krishna Das station on my Pandora to create a contemplative aura. I remember the *Shri Hanuman Chalisa*, a powerful Hindu 40-versed chant, playing on the station. I felt blessed to hear this sacred chalisa before engaging in the workshop. I presented a synopsis of my recent

> publication: MisirHiralall, Sabrina D. 2014. "The Postcolonial Reality of Using the Term "Liturgical" to Describe Hindu Dance". Journal of Research on Christian Education. 23 (2): 154-175. The participants sat in theatre style seating."[264]

The first step for me at the workshop was to build a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hinduism to correct any misconceptions. To accomplish this goal, I shared my faith through music. The Krishna Das station was powerful because there was a sense of faith from the singers who sang with their whole hearts. I knew the words to the songs. I remember singing along with the music as I waited to start the workshop. It was evident that I was a faith-based Hindu through my gestures, facial expressions, and body movement that flowed naturally. When I began the workshop, I presented my, at the time, recent article to directly help the participants build a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hinduism. They had the opportunity to ask questions to further their comprehension of Hinduism. Once I felt that the participants had a de-Orientalized knowledge base, I moved onto the next pedagogical step.

> "We engaged in a discussion about meeting in a space of hybridity. The pedagogical space of hybridity is a space where we can come together to develop something new with sensitivity for each respective tradition in mind. I related my choreography experience, which was a daunting challenge because I did not want to impose Hinduism onto a majority of non-Hindus. I explained how I developed a dance meditation that is neither Hindu nor liturgical, but rather is something new that emerged from the space of hybridity. I shared pictures of the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, and the water. These pictures were from my time on a cruise ship out in the Atlantic Ocean. We discussed our relationship to what I call the world's ornaments – the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, and the water. I thought about the phrase 'world's ornaments' based on a Hindu sloka (prayer). The line in the sloka says 'Aahaaryam Candra-Taaraadi', which translates to 'whose ornaments are the moon and the stars'. This line refers to Shivaji whose ornaments are the moon and the stars. Thus, I believe that the world's ornaments are part of a Cosmic nature. How does each of these world's ornaments help us to live? How can we be mindful to the world's ornaments? We discussed how to be

> present in the moment on the Drew University campus and remain mindful of the Earth. The participants sat in a circle on chairs for this part." [265]



The next pedagogical step for me was to discuss the sensitive space of hybridity from a theoretical stance. I explained to the participants that I do not wish to cause them harm as believers or non-believers of religion. Likewise, I asked them to remain respectful to who I am as a Hindu dancer who believes in an ethic of Hindu dance. We talked about the potential harm that might arise if we do not remain sensitive in this tender space. I facilitated a philosophical discussion as a co-inquirer with the participants. We discussed our relationship to nature. We realized that all of the elements of nature are interconnected. The interconnectedness of nature creates a sense of harmony that would not exist if one element were missing. For instance, the sun is a beautiful part of nature that provides sustenance to the Earth but if only the sun was present without the moon at all, then sustenance, as we know it, might not be feasible. We also discussed the need for water in our bodies and in the world. The human body requires water to live. We need water internally in our bodies and also externally to clean our bodies. In addition, water is often used in religious ceremonies across religious traditions. Even though there is a holy dimension to water, our oceans and other sources

of water endure harmful pollution. Many people buy "purified" water from stores because there is no longer trust in the tap water that runs through pipes. During the discussion, we realized that there is an important need to develop a sense of environmental ethics to protect the world's ornaments, which in turn, protects humanity.

> "After, we moved the chairs. The participants formed 4 rows. I taught them the choreography, which seemed to flow like natural energy from everyone in the room. I told the participants not to worry about perfection because their imperfections are their perfection. Moreover, I expressed to them that this is not a dance 'routine' but rather is a dance meditation that brings us together in unity.
>
> Then, the participants sat on the floor as I danced the choreography to the music. Finally, we all danced together as we engaged in a dance meditation with the goal of being interconnected to the Earth. When we danced together, it is as if we all meditated in unity regardless of our religious beliefs or personal identity. I again told them that they should not worry about perfecting a routine because their imperfections are their own perfections. We each have a different body type that leads us to each have a different capacity for dance. I said that they should just enjoy meditating through dance. I asked them to allow themselves to feel interconnected to the earth." [266]

The participants had a theoretical understanding of my intentions as I choreographed the dance piece. Moreover, the philosophical discussion helped us connect to one another in an effort to think about the world's ornaments and environmental ethics. As I moved forward, I focused on teaching the participants the dance piece while we were in a pedagogical space of hybridity. Here, I did not worry about the technicalities of the choreography. Instead, I told the participants that they should focus on what their body is capable of doing as they dance to honor the world's ornaments. I felt that I maintained fidelity to the ethic of Hindu dance while simultaneously teaching primarily non-Hindus in the pedagogical space of hybridity.

As I danced, I had an intense, energetic experience. There was a part in the ending of the dance where I laid flat on my back, in a meditative posture, with my hands clasped above my head and my legs bent at acute angles resting to the side of me. I laid in that posture for a few moments as the energetic music played. At that moment with my eyes closed, I felt my metaphorical third eye radiate energy that caused my spiritual vision to break through the ceiling towards the sky. I felt that I was able to see the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, and the water. Particularly, I felt Surya Dev (Sun God) and Chandra Maa (Moon God) bless me as a radiant light shined onto my spirit. Hindu scriptures show that Hindus believe in One God who manifests at different times, in different places, for different purposes. As I felt blessed by Surya Dev and Chandra Maa, I was reminded that all of the world's ornaments are a part of One Supreme Being, my Cosmic Parent who provides my life with sustenance.

> "We wrapped up the evening by sitting in a circle on the floor and engaging in a discussion about our experience. Many of the participants said that they enjoyed having a direct experience with their body in connection to the Earth. We also agreed that it was a profound experience to dance in community." [267]

As I expressed to the participants, this event was a dream come true for me. I always had a desire to dance in a community as a Hindu dancer with a group of primarily non-Hindu dancers while maintaining an ethic of Hindu dance. I wished for this because I believe, Hindu or non-Hindu, we are all a part of humanity. Therefore, we should learn to live in harmony in a space of hybridity. I had to think carefully about entering this pedagogical space of hybridity because I needed to remain sensitive to a Hindu ethic of dance and to the traditions of non-Hindus. I felt a great sense of joy radiate from each pore of my body as I expressed this sentiment to the group who smiled.

I told the participants to email me for a guiding choreography worksheet that I developed and the audio source. Because the choreography worksheet was very lengthy with many pictures, I did not want to print it for the workshop. I felt that I was displaying a sense of environmental ethics. On the worksheet, I wrote out each step, which was accompanied by a series of pictures of me engaging in the step. The participants expressed happiness through their warm smiles. The purpose of the choreography worksheet was to help them think deeply about the dance meditation and have the opportunity to engage in it again on their own.

> "As the participants left, I played the Krishna Das station on my Pandora while Karen Pechilis and I packed up. The chant 'Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya' played on the station. After, Karen and I enjoyed a mindful walk across campus on the way to the parking lot. We, at some points, were quiet during our walk below the moonlit sky as we admired the tall, towering trees and listened to the crickets chirp. I felt interconnected to the campus and the world at large. This feeling stays with me."[268]

This was a hybrid moment for me where I was neither Eastern nor Western but yet Eastern and Western. I realize that I cannot compartmentalize my identity into neat spheres. Although I write about the "East" and the "West" to press my points using the false binary that developed through imperial conquests, the East and the West are false illusions. I am a human being who lives in a world that a Supreme Being created. Whether I live on Indian soil or American soil, my identity as a human develops based on my past ancestry and my present, which will lead me to my future. As I walked that evening, I felt that I could walk a thousand miles but yet still remain a Hindu who sees Hinduism in me, through me, and all around me. Human-made laws and geographical boundaries may not always acknowledge the interconnectedness of humanity.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that I must compartmentalize religions and cultures into spheres. It is important to understand the differences of religions and cultures in an effort to remain sensitive to the many historical eras that One Supreme Being has manifested in to restore goodness to the Earth. However, it is also vital to enter a pedagogical space of hybridity to live harmoniously in a manner that acknowledges our interconnectedness as a part of humanity.

Soon after the event at Drew University, I presented for the New England Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting at Central Connecticut State University.[269] Barbara Clark, Joss French, and I were on a panel together. My portion of the panel presentation focused on how my self-study helps me to improve my pedagogy. I shared my profound experience from the abovementioned event at Drew University. To press the point during my presentation, I danced the dance meditation as I explained how I developed the choreography. Barbara Clark and Joss French invited me to dance on a labyrinth-like canvas that they used for their presentation right before me. There was a point in the dance towards the ending where I once again laid flat on my back with my hands clasped above me and my legs bent. As I mentioned, when I was in this meditative posture at Drew University, I felt a powerful energy extend from my metaphorical third eye in a manner that caused my spiritual vision to break through the ceiling and towards the world's ornaments. I felt that this experience continued as I laid in this posture on the labyrinth-like canvas at CCSU.

Barbara Clark, an artist and professor at Central Connecticut State University, painted this canvas. Dr. Clark's students also contributed to the creation of this painted canvas.

During the question and answer session, the group shared that there was a need for individuals to be in the room to feel the aura of what happened at that moment. Joss French referred to the posture as a contemplative lean back that caused the room the stretch. French's comment described how I felt as I laid on the canvas. It was as if energy radiated around me and through me as I engaged in a meditative moment that caused me to feel and see the world's ornaments clearly. This was a hybrid moment for me where I felt a merging between East and West. Yet, I had a firm grasp on my identity as a Hindu dancer who adheres to a Hindu ethic of dance.

*Summary*

To summarize, from a postcolonial perspective, it is imperative to acknowledge Hindu dancers as "Hindu dancers" and Christian liturgical dancers as "liturgical dancers". Critics might argue that liturgical dance involves dance that pertains to worship. These

critics might say that since Hindu dancers engage in worship as part of Hinduism, Hindu dancers are therefore liturgical. However, the term "liturgical dance" has its own form in the West. The term "liturgical dance" is used to describe a specific type of dance form that exists in the West. Therefore, "liturgical dance" does not adequately describe the specificity of Hindu dance that exists in the East. In fact, those who still use the term "liturgical dance" to describe Hindu dance need to be aware of the way this term conceals the hidden power manipulations of the West and furthers Orientalist agendas. In order to engage in de-Orientalization and approach the East with sensitivity, it is crucial to refer to Hindu dancers as "Hindu dancers". We cannot say liturgical dancers are Hindu dancers and Hindu dancers are liturgical dancers because this shows insensitivity for each respective dance form. As you may recall, Bramhaji, a part of the Hindu trinity, created Hindu dance to tame the five senses. The dance form of Hinduism is rooted in the ancient Hindu text known as the *Natya Shastra*.[270] On the contrary, Christian liturgical dance developed based on humankind's interest in religious dance. There is no religious authoritative ethical text in Christian liturgical dance. Furthermore, the West Orientalized Hindu dance as the West moved Hindu dance to become more like Western forms of dance. This in turn caused the West to impose its own ideal of dance onto the Eastern form of Hindu dance, which severely caused Orientalism and colonizing agendas to thrive.

To prevent this from continuing, I urge scholars to think about the distinctions between Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance to prevent Orientalist agendas from thriving. In addition, the dance curriculum and dance pedagogy differs in Christian

liturgical dance and Hindu dance because each respective dance form has distinct components. While Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance are distinguishable, I propose a *contemplative spiritual dance* form as a medium between the respective dance forms. I urge Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers to come together in a space of hybridity to determine how to remain in fidelity to each respective dance tradition while displaying a sincere sensitivity that moves beyond mere tolerance for one another.

Now that I have clarified who I am as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, I hope my colleagues will reevaluate their description of me. It is my hope that my colleagues maintain a de-Orientalized understanding of who I am as a Hindu dancer. If my colleagues continue to use inadequate terms to describe me, then they enable artificial knowledge of Orientalism and colonizing agendas to thrive. To prevent this, I plea with my colleagues to disavow Orientalist descriptions of me as a "belly dancer", "Middle Eastern dancer", "Pan-Asian dancer", and "liturgical dancer". While I only focused on why the term "liturgical dancer" inadequately describes me, the other labels are also fallacious. It is essential for my colleagues and viewers of the dance to maintain a de-Orientalized interpretation of who I am as a Hindu dancer before I enter a pedagogical space to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. Once I enter a pedagogical space, I ask that viewers of the dance embrace a *sacred gaze* that fosters a de-Orientalizing educational experience and reject any arising *Western male gazes or imperial gazes* that promote Orientalism. I focus on the nature of the gazes in the following chapter.

# Chapter 5

## The Gazes

I often am in a unique position as an educator who uses Hindu dance to teach because my dance costume, religious clothing, and cultural clothing are a part of my professional wardrobe. In many instances, I am barefoot in academia as I enter and leave the pedagogical spaces in which I teach. I cannot ignore my uniqueness as an educator, which causes me to feel vulnerable to certain gazes. Through my self-study, I realize that there are instances when I feel certain types of gazes from an individual or group. These gazes, that frequently intersect, often impact my ability to use Hindu dance pedagogically. Thus, my self-study forces me to explore the nature of gaze theory.

Before I enter a pedagogical space, I consider it necessary to discuss how the viewer's gazes impact my phenomenology. This in turn affects my ability to use Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism successfully with postcolonial realities in mind. I focus on the nature of the gazes that emerge through my self-study data in the following chapter. While I hope to contribute my own unique theoretical view of the gazes, it is important to realize that gaze theory is not a recent development.[271] I will focus my attention on Laura Mulvey[272], E. Ann Kaplan[273], and David Morgan[274] because their contributions to gaze theory, which often intersect, are significant for this project since the gazes they focus on are common themes across my self-study data.

I will relate how Laura Mulvey's[275] notion of the *male gaze* is relevant to my phenomenological experience and also offer criticism of Mulvey's theory. Mulvey

focuses on the female as an object of male fantasy as she deals with the sexualization of the female body. Since I am my own subject and object, Mulvey's theory of the *male gaze* is relevant for me. For this reason, I must acknowledge the feminist nature of my project as I call for a rupture of the projected male fantasy. The feminist aspect of this project is based on the assumptions that many have about me because of my gender that is tied to my ethnicity as a woman of Indian descent. This is where Mulvey's *male gaze* intersects with Kaplan's *imperial gaze*. Here, I cannot escape my femininity and ancestral background that is a part of my identity. When my body feels heavily sexualized, the sexualization blocks my ability to use my body to teach through Hindu dance. The projection of the male fantasy through the *male gaze*, as presented by Mulvey, becomes an obstacle that I must face as I pursue my goal to use Kuchipudi Indian classical dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism in a de-Orientalized manner.

E. Ann Kaplan's[276] notion of the *imperial gaze* provides a postcolonial theoretical view within gaze theory. Postcolonial theory influences Kaplan's description of the *imperial gaze*. Kaplan pays close attention to dominance that occurs through power. Specifically, Kaplan focuses on how some Whites aim to civilize non-Whites with a universal culture for humanity. Kaplan uses Hollywood as an example to show how non-Whites are portrayed as infantile minorities in need of learning how to be civil in society. Kaplan's description of the *imperial gaze* is relevant for my project because it is yet another obstacle for me. In some instances, I sense that some scholars attempt to dominate me in a manner that aims to civilize me as a part of Western society.

Furthermore, this *imperial gaze* is tied to the abovementioned *male gaze* such as when I sense that an individual seeks to use power to dominate my body sexually in an attempt to make me an object of the Orient. This comes from a long history of colonialism that furthered Orientalist agendas. While I do not sense the *imperial gaze* often, there still are times when I feel the presence of an *imperial gaze*. I cannot deny the power of this gaze to dominate me if I do not confront it. For this reason, I must maintain a postcolonial position as I confront the *imperial gaze* as I use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to educate non-Hindus.

David Morgan's[277] notion of the *sacred gaze* provides a particular religious studies framework of gazes. Morgan outlines a method that individuals should employ as they view religious objects. The *sacred gaze* deals with the projection of the male fantasy through the *male gaze* and the notion of the *imperial gaze* in a manner that calls on individuals to acknowledge the sacredness of religious objects. In other words, the *sacred gaze* helps to confront the *male gaze* and the *imperial gaze*. Morgan's *sacred gaze* is relevant for my project because it provides a method for individuals to maintain a gaze that I warrant as a Hindu dancer.

After I present Mulvey's theory of the *male gaze*, Kaplan's theory of the *imperial gaze*, and Morgan's theory of the *sacred gaze*, I will move on to discuss the *educational gaze*. A desire to learn could still further Orientalist agendas. Therefore, I focus on the difference between a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that does not further Orientalism and an *Orientalized gaze* that promotes Orientalism. Once I relate how to maintain a *de-Orientalized educational gaze*, I will then turn to describe how I feel as a *spiritual other*

and an *exotic other* through my perception of the gazes. It is crucial for me protect myself from any exoticism that blocks my ability to use Kuchipudi Indian classical dance to educate non-Hindus. For this reason, I discuss the notion of a *shield*. Overall, I hope to contribute to the literature on gaze theory as I confront the *male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* with a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that acknowledges the phenomenological moments that promote or block the ability to engage in teaching and learning.

*Laura Mulvey: The Male Gaze*

As I read Laura Mulvey's[278] theory about the *male gaze*, I felt that I could directly relate to Mulvey's description because it is a common theme that emerges throughout my self-study data. Sometimes I sense that individuals project an erotic fantasy onto my female body. For instance, I sensed this *male gaze* when I presented *An Embodiment of Virtue Through the Selfless Princess Mirabai and the Selfish Princess Satyabhama* in March 2011 at the *Mid-Atlantic American Academy of Religion Annual Regional Meeting* in New Brunswick, New Jersey.[279] As I entered the conference room assigned for my presentation and dance, I immediately sensed a *male gaze*. Another session was wrapping up as I entered the conference room. Keep in mind that I was dressed in an Eastern long white skirt with a green blouse, and traditional religious Hindu dance jewelry.

As I began to enter the conference room, I was abruptly stopped by the words from the presenter's mouth. He said in a very quiet but yet noticeable slow voice, "Gorgeous." As I heard this, I immediately felt reduced to the male fantasy of the Orient. Here, I sense that the *male gaze* intersects with an *imperial gaze* that causes

misconceived notions to develop about who I am as a female of Indian descent. The look on the male's face coupled with the tone in his voice made me feel as if he immediately had misplaced sexualized images of what he expected me to be like as a female of Indian descent. I rushed to my seat in a room filled with people who now seemed to view me as a foreign object of the East.

While I sensed more of a *male gaze* from the male, I feel as though he provoked the attendees in the room to direct an *imperial gaze* towards me. The presenter continued his presentation and left the room. I sensed that my discomfort was noticeable to the many academics present. It was quite evident from the disturbed expression on my face. I felt as if I was trembling with heated skin. Consequently, I did not speak much to my colleagues in the room before my presentation, which was scheduled next. The atmosphere in the conference room did not seem sacred to me, but rather it seemed tainted with the complex dynamic of an Orientalist fantasy of what the East should be.

To begin with, Laura Mulvey[280] uses the term *male gaze* to describe how males look at females. She writes about the erotic contemplation of the *male gaze* that projects male fantasy onto the female body in cinema of the West. Mulvey states,

> "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as a sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, and plays to signify the male desire."[281]

I agree with Mulvey from a Western perspective. However, I call this the *Western male gaze* because Mulvey's work is based on cinema of the Western world for a Western

audience. Although this gaze does not only occur in a Western context, Mulvey misses the point that this type of *male gaze* is based on a Western context that develops from a Western epistemological framework. It seems that the gaze is gendered male to show the dominance that is present within the gaze. This type of gaze reinforces the misleading notion of the person who objectifies as dominant and the person who is objectified as passive.

In many cases, females subject males to eroticism. For instance, females may use a *Western male gaze* to focus on the muscles of men in boxing matches or the sports arena. The objectification of the male body as a sexual object is still the *Western male gaze* regardless of whether or not men or women objectify or are objectified. In other words, women socially adopt the *Western male gaze* as they objectify men in a Western context just as men use the *Western male gaze* to objectify women.

This notion of the *Western male gaze* deals with the politics of gender that is evident in Kuchipudi dance. According to the *Natya Shastra*[282], the creation of dance is for men and women. Despite this, during the 14th century, Siddhendra Yogi[283] confined Kuchipudi dance to include male Brahmin boys from the upper social class, and he excluded females as well as non-Brahmin males from being a performer of Kuchipudi dance. However, in the early part of the 20th century, Brahmashri Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry[284], a male guru of Kuchipudi dance, developed a system of solo performances that included females in the dances. Just as males played female roles as well as male roles in the past, females began to play male roles in addition to female roles during the dance.

I do not wish to elaborate on the historical politics of gender within the Kuchipudi dance tradition. Rather, I would like to focus on the issue of the *Western male gaze* that is relevant to my philosophical project. The *Western male gaze* of a large number of males to female performers seems to place an emphasis on erotic contemplation as Mulvey indicates. Based on this, women are ornamental creatures who dress, act, dance, etc. to gratify male eroticism. While this *Western male gaze* may or may not be appropriate for ballet or modern dancers, or dancers who pole dance or strip tease with the purpose of stimulating eroticism, this *Western male gaze* is not an appropriate gaze for Hindu dancers. This *Western male gaze* poses a direct pedagogical problem for me as a Kuchipudi Indian classical dancer who attempts to use Hindu dance as a pedagogical tool. An even more complex dynamic develops when the *Western male gaze* becomes entangled with other gazes, such as the *imperial gaze*.

In fact, this complexity is evident in the long history that views the colonized "other" through a *Western male gaze*. Many males of the British Empire looked at Indian classical dance and Middle Eastern dancers with a *Western male gaze* coupled with an *imperial gaze*.[285] As mentioned earlier, c*olonization* occurs when a group of people or a nation appropriates land and resources to exploit others. This often happens when one group of people enforces their religion or culture onto another nation or group of people. Chakravorty[286] discusses the British colonization of music and dance in India. Evidently, the British colonized Indian classical dance as they used female temple dancers for their own erotic pleasure. This is the point when Eastern dance began to move from sacred to profane due to the multifaceted dynamic of the interlacing *male gaze* and *imperial gaze*.

The sexualized *male gaze* intertwined with an *imperial gaze* that sought to control the sexuality of the temple dancers, as the British expected the dancers to conform to British expectations.

Here, there is also an influence on gender roles in Hindu dance. Indian classical dance was once both masculine and feminine with male and female dancers. Due to the British influence, we now see more female dancers who also maintain masculine roles in the ancient dance dramas. My point here is that Hindu dance became prey to a Western view of masculinity and femininity based on the Western view of what is aesthetically pleasing. It is my contention that the exoticness of the *Western male gaze* contaminated the sacredness and tradition of the art form of Indian classical Hindu dance and also impacted the psychological well-being and social role of the dancers.

The *Western male gaze* still exists in today's Western world. It may not even always be during the performance. I return to the *Western male gaze* that I sensed when I presented at the abovementioned presentation, *An Embodiment of Virtue Through the Selfless Princess Mirabai and the Selfish Princess Satyabhama* in March 2011 at the *Mid-Atlantic American Academy of Religion Annual Regional Meeting* in New Brunswick, New Jersey.[287] Despite my effort, I sensed that the viewers did not strongly believe in the history of Princess Mira and Satyabhama. Rather, the viewers engaged in an *imperial gaze*, which was aroused by an intermingled *Western male gaze* that viewed these princesses as mystical and mythological princesses, based on the Orientalist notions of how the West constructs knowledge of the East. I should point out that the panel I presented on was confined to a very small room, which I felt only could accommodate

about thirty attendees or so. Moreover, I was the only female on the panel. Therefore, I do not refer to all the members of the *American Academy of Religion* here but rather refer to my experience during this particular presentation. Nevertheless, because I sensed that the viewers saw the dance drama as mythical, I felt that they Orientalized the dance that accompanied my paper as they looked upon me with a dominating *Western male gaze*, which intertwined complexly with an *imperial gaze*.

During the presentation, I sensed that the attendees viewed me as a fragile young female graduate student. I sensed that they had many questions but were very careful not to startle me. Immediately after I left the conference room, many individuals approached me with questions and also helpful constructive feedback. I sensed that the attendees did not feel that I was strong enough to handle the intellectual rigor that usually accompanies a question and answer session. The attendees seemed to remain very sensitive to my body as a female Hindu dancer in an attempt to move past an *imperial gaze*. The *imperial gaze* that I sensed was not harmful but rather seemed to develop from the long history of colonialism that caused misplaced assumptions of gender to develop. Yet, I felt that my outer appearance was reduced to a colonial object in a manner that prevented me from using my body to educate through Hindu dance. This feeling was probably partially due to the situation that occurred right before I presented. Even though the attendees seemed to see my potential as a scholar since they did ask me questions, albeit not in the formal setting of the presentation, and also offered constructive feedback, I still felt that I was reduced to an object of the Orient. My Peer Scholar suggests that the attendees were trying to “treat me nicely” without realizing how demeaning it made me

feel as a scholar. Also, most academics usually expect conference participants to read long papers in a monotone format. I did not conform to the standard academic conference expectation.

At any rate, this kind of Orientalism is harmful because the viewers may have pre-conceived misrepresentations of the East, which impacts their perception of the dance. In this instance, I did not feel that I used Kuchipudi Indian classical dance successfully to educate non-Hindus but rather felt as if I was an exotic object that furthered Orientalist interpretations of Hinduism through dance. The multifarious dynamic of the *Western male gaze* that transected with the *imperial gaze* felt demeaning because it enforced the notion of women as passive, furthered Orientalist agendas, and made me seem as if I was an infantile minority out of place in a Western world. As an exotic object, I felt the heat of my skin rise as a somber mood filled my spirit with a tainted disgust of what an Eastern woman should be when described by Westerners. I felt a blank expression on my face as I struggled against the exoticism. Even after I changed my clothing from my Eastern costume to my Western brown and white knee-length business dress, I still felt as if I furthered Orientalist agendas because I felt relieved of the presentation, which caused me to temporarily lose sight of who I am as a Hindu dancer who educates in the West.

This is precisely why it is imperative to develop a de-Orientalized pedagogy to ensure that I do not further Orientalist agendas when I aim to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism through Kuchipudi Indian classical dance. It is evident that a de-Orientalized pedagogy needs to acknowledge the pedagogical task that requires educators to confront

the politics of the intertwining gazes and warrant the eye of the non-Hindus to see differently through a de-Orientalized lens. Essentially, I need to understand who I am as a Western woman of Eastern descent because this will help me improve my pedagogy as I educate non-Hindus about Hinduism in a Western society.

I propose that viewers of Kuchipudi dance maintain a *hybrid gaze* as they view the dance. Homi Bhabha's influential discourse on culture prompts me to think about the position of Kuchipudi dance in a diasporic world where people are constantly negotiating boundaries. Bhabha writes,

> "Culture becomes as much an uncomfortable, disturbing practice of survival and supplementarity – between art and politics, past and present, the public and the private – as its resplendent being is a moment of pleasure, enlightenment or liberation. It is from such narrative positions that the postcolonial prerogative seeks to affirm and extend a new collaborative dimension, both within the margins of the nation-space and across boundaries between nations and peoples."[288]

Bhabha points to the intersecting spaces where cultural contact is inevitable. The postcolonial prerogative of Bhabha inspires me to think about the development of a *hybrid gaze* as a type of educational gaze. This gaze might seem uncomfortable to some because of an unfamiliarity of religions and cultures. However, religious and cultural contact requires a *hybrid gaze* that seeks to understand each other as a part of humanity.

With a *hybrid gaze,* I do not sense that the viewers have misrepresentations of the East, but rather I sense that they are informed about the East based on knowledge construction of the East through the East. Likewise, viewers should view the West based on knowledge construction of the West through the West. I do not wish to establish a dichotomy between the West and the East. On the contrary, a *hybrid gaze* is neither fully

Western nor Eastern but rather attempts to understand epistemological frameworks in a space of mediation. This *hybrid gaze* is not gendered male or female but instead is a humanized gaze that destabilizes the male as the bearer of the active gazes and the female as the holder of the passive gazes. A *hybrid gaze* does not Orientalize the dance with misrepresentations. For instance, I sense that the viewers with a *hybrid gaze* appreciate the costumes as a representation of the ancient times of Hinduism. While the gaze of the viewers is dependent upon each individual's epistemological background and each individual's phenomenology, my concern involves how the nature of the gaze impacts my ability to use Kuchipudi Indian classical dance pedagogically to educate.

*E. Ann Kaplan: The Imperial Gaze*

In some instances throughout my self-study data, I encounter a confrontational gaze that causes me to feel that some individuals do not have any desire to understand Hinduism and Indian culture from a de-Orientalized perspective. E. Ann Kaplan's[289] notion of the imperial gaze emerges as a common theme throughout my self-study data for this reason, although it is not the only dynamic in an *imperial gaze*. Sometimes, I sense that some perceive me as infantile Indian who needs to learn "civilized" culture instead of teaching about Hinduism and Indian culture. Also, I feel that some entangle the *imperial gaze* and a *Western male gaze* that views my dance solely for entertainment purposes, which misses the core purpose of Hindu dance along with my intention as a Hindu dancer who uses dance pedagogically.

For the purposes of further examining gaze theory relevant to my project, I will now focus my attention on Kaplan's[290] description of the *imperial gaze*. Kaplan refers to

several postcolonial theorists, including Said, as she reveals the concealed implications of the *imperial gaze*.

> "By the 'Imperial Gaze,' I mean a gaze structure which fails to understand that, as Edward Said phrases it, non-American peoples have integral cultures and lives that work according to their own, albeit different, logic (Said, 1993/94, xxiii). The imperial gaze reflects the assumption that the white western subject is central, much as the male gaze assumes the centrality of the male subject. As noted before, anxiety prevents this gaze from actually seeing the people gazed at. Even reformist thinkers, missionaries and educators are incapable of understanding the position of the Other and their own gaze structure vis-à-vis them. Anxiety, in this case, is displaced into a condescending paternalism. The anxiety arises from the fragility of being in the 'master' position. Masters unconsciously know that mastery cannot remain theirs forever: there's always the threat of being toppled."[291]

Said's postcolonial theory[292] influences Kaplan's description of the *imperial gaze*. Kaplan uses the term *imperial gaze* to describe a gaze that does not understand that different people may live within integral cultures. According to Kaplan, the *imperial gaze* occurs mostly from Whites who believe that the White, Western way of life is a universal concept that all of humanity should live by. Kaplan seems to psychoanalyze White, Western individuals as she claims that they have an anxiety of losing control over seemingly infantile non-Whites. Kaplan indicates that White reformist thinkers, missionaries, and educators engage in an *imperial gaze* to enforce White culture among non-Whites to ensure that non-Whites do not gain control over Whites. Like Mulvey's *male gaze*,[293] Kaplan relates the *imperial gaze* as a gaze that objectifies seemingly "infantile" societies in a manner that refuses to acknowledge the individuals of these societies as intellectually and organizationally capable. Essentially, Kaplan's *imperial gaze* seems to be a colonizing gaze that believes in universals to the point that causes

supremacist behaviors that attempt to enforce patriarchal white ideals onto infantile, objectified non-Whites.

Kaplan provides an example as she explains why the *imperial gaze* is a common part of Hollywood.

> "Part of Hollywood's imaginary self-construction is that it is not a *national* cinema, but a universal or global one. One can see this on a simple, literal level in the names Hollywood studios give to themselves – like 'Paramount' and 'Universal.' Such names suggest global connotations as well as cosmic grandiosity. In the latter case, the logo images the Earth in the Universe. But the 'universal' imagery is meant to apply also to the characters and content of narratives, i.e., that these are universal human stories true all over the world. The globe symbols insist that Hollywood is not about Americans and American life specifically, but about all human life and behavior."[294]

Hollywood enforces the *imperial gaze* through a global cinema. Kaplan affirms that Hollywood does not portray solely the American life, but rather aims to set the ideal for humanity across the globe. The complexity of the *imperial gaze* intensifies with the intertwining *Western male gaze* that endorses the sexualization of bodies. If Kaplan's psychoanalysis is correct, then Hollywood engages in an *imperial gaze* that seeks to enforce a Western culture as the universal culture of humanity in a manner that imperializes other societies and individuals who are objectified as infantilized minorities.

Kaplan explains,

> "Common to many Hollywood images of others are the following: 1) infantilizing minorities – imagining them as helpless and childlike within adult bodies, fixed at the 'primitive' stage of development; 2) animalizing minorities – showing their similarities to animals (note the repetition of apes associated with 'savages'), and associating them with nature; 3) sexualizing minorities as lusty, libidinous; 4) debasing minorities as immoral, not knowing right from wrong, if not quite simply evil."[295]

Kaplan engages in an analysis of several films such as *I'm British But…*[296], *King Kong*[297], *Tarzan*[298], *Bird of Paradise*[299], *Birth of a Nation*[300], *The Air Up There*[301], *Black Narcissus*[302], *Mississippi Masala*[303], and *Bhaji on the Beach*[304] to name a few. From the film analysis, Kaplan comes to the conclusion that Hollywood infantilizes minorities, animalizes minorities, sexualizes minorities, and immoralizes minorities. When this occurs, Hollywood maintains an *imperial gaze* that aims to show the so-called dangers of not conforming to Western ideals. The *imperial gaze*, in this sense, seeks to enforce Hollywood's Western universal ideals across the globe. Kaplan specifically focuses on white universal ideals as she states,

> "Exoticism functions from the position of superiority, white control. It is part of the 'gaze of empire' condescendingly toward the 'savage' Other that empire comes to control and use for its own ends."[305]

Kaplan argues that Whites believe they are in a superior position to exoticize minorities with a condescending gaze that aims to control minorities to advance white culture. To overcome the *imperial gaze*, Kaplan suggests that Whites become a part of *Whiteness Studies*,[306] which aim to think about what it means to be White.

A film analysis of Bollywood[307], the Indian version of Hollywood, furthers Kaplan's argument. In many cases, Bollywood film directors, usually of Indian descent, compose films that conform to Western ideals while simultaneously putting down the traditional Eastern ideals of Eastern religions and cultures. The multidimensional complications become evident in the interlocking *Western male gaze* that causes Indian film directors to particularly promote the sexualization of Indian women. Sometimes, Bollywood film directors do acknowledge the hybridity of the West and the East.

Despite this, there is still a long history in Bollywood films that also infantilizes, animalizes, sexualizes, and immoralizes Indians. Even though this is not always the case, I consider it necessary to point out that films in Bollywood often adopt an *imperial gaze*, which creates a backdrop of how Westerners and non-Westerners view Eastern dance. Eastern dancers, in this sense, become cultural objects that maintain the nature of the *imperial gaze* and often the entangling *Western male gaze*.

For example, the Bollywood film *Pakeezah*[308] directed by Kamal Amrohi in 1971, portrays Indian dancers as dancers who do not conform to traditional Indian ideals of dance. In the film *Pakeezah*, a young female Nargis, dances Kathak-like songs in a brothel. Kathak[309] is a traditional form of Indian dance that the British reduced to brothel dances during the colonization of India. In the film, Nargis meets a noble man whose family disapproves of his relationship with a seeming whore raised in a brothel. Nargis dies but leaves behind a baby girl, Sahibjaan, who cannot seem to escape the cycle of singing and dancing in her aunt's brothel. In this film, Indian dance becomes a tabooed dance form that is fit for whores but not for noble women. The life of an Indian dancer, in the film, is a disgraceful life that lacks moral virtue and instead aims to satisfy the male fantasy and the fictionalized ideals of the Western imperialists who imperialized India.

Other Bollywood films such as *Caravan*[310] directed by Nasir Hussain in 1971 depict Indian dance in an infantile tribal manner that is sugarcoated with Western ideals. For instance, in the film *Caravan*, the song *Chadti Jawani* portrays female Indian dancers in India as tribal dancers who are dressed in short tribal skirts with belly tops and non-traditional Indian tribal jewelry. The men, on the contrary, wear traditional Indian male

dhotis, which is clothing that wraps traditionally around the length of each leg. The females dance with a great deal of belly movement that is non-traditional in Indian dance. In the same film, I am troubled by the dance *Piya Tu* by an Indian dancer known as Helen. The dancer begins the dance in a red Western dress at the scene of bar while drinking alcohol. The dancer, who appears drunk, moves onto the fictionalized stage as she enters through a human-sized cage and then slides down a slide that is at the end of the cage. Throughout the dance, the dancer swings on a pole and then strips the red dress so that she appears to wear a golden belly top and a short golden skirt. This dance is done with a great deal of belly movement. Overall, I am troubled by the portrayal of Indians in this film as Eastern tribal, animalized humans and also disturbed by the Western exoticness of the Indian dance *Piya Tu* by Helen.

Similarly, the Hindi film song *Angori Angori* from the 1991 Bollywood film *Jaanwar*[311] directed by Suneel Darshan also portrays an Indian dancer dancing with a great deal of belly movement in a male bar. This confuses traditional Indian classical dance with Middle Eastern belly dance. The dancer wears a long, Indian silver skirt with a silver belly top and Indian costume jewelry. Nevertheless, the dancer strays from traditional Indian dance and leans towards a Westernized version of Indian dance based on a long history of imperialism. The Bollywood film industry has a long history that portrays the changes that Indian dance has endured over time based on Western views of what Bollywood should be. Overall, Bollywood presents me with a pedagogical concern because many who view my presentations and dances often are influenced with the prior

knowledge of Bollywood and Hollywood that is, in some cases, built on a long history of imperialism.

Kaplan's *imperial gaze* ties together Said,[312] Bhabha,[313] and Nandy's[314] respective postcolonial theories. Said would concur that the West exhibited an *imperial gaze* as the West colonized the East to conform to Western ideals. The *imperial gaze* is at work when the Eastern history of the East becomes a fictionalized fantasy and a Western history becomes imposed on to the East. Bhabha may agree that the *imperial gaze* has the dangerous potential to create new misrepresentations of the East. Nandy may affirm that the *imperial gaze* plays a role in the way the East becomes a mirror of the West. Kaplan's analysis of the *imperial gaze* causes me to remain aware of the underlying postcolonial theories that inform the gaze. I pay close attention to how Hollywood and Bollywood cause individuals to develop a prior knowledge of the East that, in some cases, views the East as a cultural object that still remains imperialized. This influences the assumptions that many may have of me as I enter a pedagogical space to teach and use Kuchipudi Indian classical dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. For this reason, it is imperative for me to understand how Kaplan's notion of the *imperial gaze* is a concealed part of the intertwining gazes that I may receive as I dance.

*David Morgan: The Sacred Gaze*

As my self-study data indicates, the *sacred gaze* is the type of gaze that I hope to express and receive from viewers of the dance. It is important to note that this gaze is often interconnected with the dynamic of gazes, such as the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze*. When I dance, I explicitly ask the viewers to move past my bodily

movement as entertaining. Thus, I implicitly ask the viewers to pay attention to the presence of a *Western male gaze* and attempt to move past it. Instead, I tell the viewers that I hope that they have a religious, spiritual, and/or aesthetic experience. I explain to the viewers that it is my wish that they employ a *sacred gaze* as I dance. Usually, I sense that the background knowledge that I share before I dance serves to guide the viewers to develop a *sacred gaze*, which sometimes confronts an *imperial gaze*. I feel that I successfully radiate a *sacred gaze* to viewers of the dance who also radiate a sacred gaze back to me. This is a form of mirroring, which I mentioned in an early chapter. Nandy[315] points to the way colonizers wanted to see Western ideas reflected by Easterners. Through a *sacred gaze*, I propose a type of mirroring where there is an intention to genuinely understand one another. The *sacred gaze*, for me, often transcends the viewers. I often sense a *sacred gaze* from the atmosphere around me and I feel that I reciprocate a *sacred gaze* back to the atmosphere. Perhaps, these are my ancestors blessing me. This, I sense, is a divine energy from a Supreme Being that reminds me of my purpose as a Hindu dancer.

I now turn to David Morgan's[316] seminal notion of the *sacred gaze*, because this is a main theme that emerges in my self-study data. Morgan indicates that each individual imposes a distinct epistemological framework onto objects to develop further knowledge about them. Morgan specifically refers to objects within a religious visual culture. He uses the term *sacred gaze* to refer to people who view an object with spiritual significance.

> "*Sacred gaze* is a term that designates the particular configuration of ideas, attitudes, and customs that informs a religious act of seeing as it occurs within a

> given cultural and historical setting. A sacred gaze is the manner in which a way of seeing invests an image, a viewer, or an act of viewing with spiritual significance."[317]

People use their own preconceptions within their epistemological frameworks to determine how they view objects within certain cultural and historical contexts. This is where an Orientalized epistemological framework provokes the intersection of a *sacred gaze* and an *imperial gaze*. The viewer's way of seeing determines what the object becomes for that individual. The object gains spiritual significance as the viewer's belief in the object causes the object to become what it is in the viewer's mind. There is a certain way that the viewer views the object, which contributes to the growth of the viewer's epistemological framework. When used appropriately with a de-Orientalized epistemological framework, the *sacred gaze* attempts to understand the spiritual significance of images. The gaze first and foremost requires the self to open up to the sacred. This openness to the sacred creates a receptivity that allows us to consciously engage in religious understanding. For instance, visitors to a museum do not need to pray to Hindu murtis (statue-like images) but rather should aim to understand the symbolism of the murtis for Hindus. In the case of Hinduism and Kuchipudi dance, viewers should use a *sacred gaze* not necessarily to develop a faith in Hinduism but rather to understand how my faith of Hinduism develops as a Kuchipudi dancer.

In order for a de-Orientalized epistemological framework to develop, it seems that Morgan indicates that viewers must engage in a covenant.

> "There is a tacit agreement, a compact or covenant, that a viewer observes when viewing an image in order to be engaged by it, in order to believe what the image reveals or says or means or makes one feel."[318]

The covenant is crucial because it implies that viewers should attempt to view religious objects with a comprehension of the associated religious and cultural history attached to the object. Viewers should attempt to understand what the image hopes to reveal.

Here, it is important to beware of colonizing intentions of artists or others who entangle a *sacred gaze* and an *imperial gaze*. Morgan indicates that several artists developed pieces based on the missionary culture of the time that was designed to "civilize" the indigenous.

> "The indigenous were seen as mere children – naïve, unintelligent, unsophisticated, and requiring intrusive custodial care."[319]

During colonial times, most Europeans, who employed an *imperial gaze*, felt that it was a duty to care for the indigenous people in an attempt to civilize them as a part of a cultured society. For this reason, Spanish religious authorities and the Inquisition destroyed religious shrines in the New World.[320] This was not done solely out of hatred but rather was a cruel parental attempt to civilize the indigenous people with a strong dosage of Western religion and culture. Christian churches and monuments replaced the sacred shrines of the non-Christians.[321] The attempt to civilize the indigenous continued as artists blended Christian images with indigenous religion and culture. Likewise, the British Empire engaged in similar course of actions in British India. According to Morgan, an unknown artist composed an art piece of Jesus to intentionally resemble the Hindu incarnation of Shri Krishna.[322] While there was a missionary intention present, many Hindus viewed a new-found Jesus as a part of Hinduism.

Morgan quotes the missionary Richard Taylor who says,

> "If we take the whole fact of Incarnation seriously then the possibility of portraying Jesus with an Indian body and style cannot by any means be ruled out. On the contrary, maybe in some sense He must become, and be seen to become, an Indian."[323]

The idea of Jesus Christ tests the faith of Hindus who believe in incarnations of God. If Hindus believe that it is possible for God to incarnate, then the historicity of Jesus Christ as a Christian incarnation of God is not a logical impossibility for Hindus. For this reason, Hindus honored the image of Jesus Christ in their homes as they would Hindu murtis (statue-like images). There is a clear distinction here between Hindus and Christian missionaries. Although Christian missionaries attempted to convert Hindus, Hindus embraced the image of Christ as a part of Hinduism. The *sacred gaze* of the Hindus attempted to understand the spiritual significance of the image of Christ. Keep in mind though that some Hindus converted to Christianity due to the evangelical effect of the Christian missionaries and also due to the appealing simplicity of Christian worship. On the contrary, exclusivist Christian missionaries were not open to learning about Hinduism and genuinely integrating Hinduism into Christianity.

Christians did not honor the Hindu murtis as the Hindus honored the image of Christ. Instead, as I mentioned earlier, Christian missionaries destroyed the religious Hindu shrines and replaced the shrines with Christian temples. Here, the *sacred gaze* of the Christian missionaries coupled with the *imperial gaze* is a supremacist gaze based on exclusivist religious principles that colonized so-called indigenous people with so-called civilized religion. This dangerous *sacred gaze* is not truly a *sacred gaze* but rather a so-called *sacred gaze* that uses an absolutist concept of religion in a supremacist manner that attempts to colonize humanity. A genuine *sacred gaze* must enter into a covenant with

cultures of humanity in a manner that does not wish to destroy or manipulate different cultures with an enforcement of decisively Western, colonialist ideals.

Christian missionaries should attempt to maintain a *sacred gaze* that embraces a genuine universal concept of religion in a pragmatic manner. For instance, Christian missionaries need to understand non-Christian religion and culture from an indigenous perspective that respects the spiritual significance of indigenous people. Christian missionaries also need to maintain an awareness of the *imperial gaze* that is influenced by the power struggle that takes place between themselves and indigenous peoples because these two perspectives are always unequal and unstable due to a long history of imperialism. This is a test of the faith of Christians who believe Jesus Christ as the One true God. At the same time, non-Christians should understand Christian universalism that influences the epistemology of some Christians. Christians and non-Christians should develop a *sacred gaze* that enters into a covenant.

Once Christian missionaries employ a *sacred gaze* to understand non-Christian religions and culture, then two valuable possibilities arise. First, there is a viable opportunity for genuine interfaith philosophical dialogue that both challenges and confirms faith-based religious beliefs. For instance, if Christians believed Jesus Christ lived on Earth, then is it possible that Christ is indeed a specific incarnation that is a part of the One Supreme Being that Hindus identify with? Isn’t it possible that Christ is a form of a Supreme Being who incarnated in Hindu manifestations in ages long before the Christian time period? Is it possible that all the religions are related somehow under fundamental principles? Instead of assuming the answers to these questions, Christians

and non-Christians should discuss questions of this nature from a perspective that remains faithful to each religious tradition without disrespecting the epistemological frameworks of the various religious traditions. Through a discussion of this nature, it is possible that each religious tradition leads to the same place, which is with One Supreme Being. This is the possible universal thread that remains pragmatic for each religious tradition through the nature of an appropriate *sacred gaze*.

*De-Orientalized Educational Gaze and Orientalized Educational Gaze*

My phenomenological experience indicates that I use Kuchipudi Indian classical dance successfully if I am a receptor of a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that views Kuchipudi Indian classical dance as the divine art that it is. A *de-Orientalized educational gaze* aims to learn about the Kuchipudi dance tradition and Hinduism from a representative perspective that takes into account the primary sources of the dance tradition and Hinduism's history. This gaze resists the West and East binaries because this gaze acknowledges the messy politics of a gaze. An *Orientalized educational gaze* does aim to learn about the Kuchipudi dance tradition and Hinduism but does not take into account the validity of the sources or its historical religious integrity. There is no question of credibility to ensure reliability and validity within the sources. This gaze causes Orientalism to thrive as Orientalist interpretations remain concealed.

While it may seem that both gazes have the possibility to be educational in the sense that they curiously aim to learn, this is not the case. Individuals who maintain an *Orientalized educational gaze* remain tied to the *Western male gaze*, which reduces the learning process to a reinforcement of how these individuals already see the viewed

object or phenomenon. A *de-Orientalized educational gaze* offers the opportunity to truly learn how to see the world differently. It is crucial to maintain a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that focuses on representing the Kuchipudi dance tradition and Hinduism as opposed to an *Orientalized educational gaze* that misrepresents Kuchipudi dance and Hinduism in an artificial manner. I do not mean to create a set category in relation to Western values or norms. What I am saying is that there is a need to enter into a *sacred gaze* to maintain a de-Orientalized understanding of Hinduism and Indian culture adequately. To prevent Orientalist agendas from thriving, I ask that viewers of the dance embrace a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that promotes a de-Orientalizing educational experience and rejects further Orientalist educational experiences.

When I sense that I am a receptor of a *de-Orientalized educational gaze*, then my phenomenology indicates that the viewers of the dance are likely to view me as a *spiritual other* as opposed to an *exotic other*. First, I will define how I use the terminology of the *spiritual other* as I de-Orientalize possible Orientalist interpretations. Second, I will define the way I use the terminology of the *exotic other* as I reveal the concealed implications of gazing at the dancer with this particular ideology. This two-fold goal enables the viewers of the dance to fully appreciate my intention as a dancer as I warrant a particular gaze. The core idea here is that the viewers maintain a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that in turn causes the viewers to view the dancer as a *spiritual other* who represents the goal to educate about Hinduism through Kuchipudi Indian classical dance as opposed to an *exotic other* who corrupts the tradition.

*Spiritual other*

Before I use Kuchipudi Indian classical dance to educate non-Hindus, I ask viewers of the dance to maintain an awareness of the above-mentioned gazes that frequently intersect. Overall, before I dance, it is an ongoing interest for viewers to enter into a covenant that accompanies a *sacred gaze*, as related by David Morgan. I acknowledge that viewers may have many misconceptions of Eastern dance based on Hollywood and Bollywood's maintenance of the *imperial gaze* as explained by Kaplan. Yet, I consider it necessary for viewers to let go of the *Western male gaze* that is often a part of the film industry because this gaze blocks the *sacred gaze*. If viewers aim to engage in teaching and learning with me, then I ask viewers to enter into the covenant of a *sacred gaze* that aims to understand the spiritual significance of Hindu dance. I do not seek to evangelize non-Hindus to develop a *sacred gaze* that solely adheres to Hindu ideals, but rather my goal is to create a de-Orientalized learning space that seeks to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism through the *sacred gaze* that develops as I use Kuchipudi Indian classical dance pedagogically to educate *about* Hinduism.

Through an analysis of my self-study data, I developed a pedagogical process to guide the viewers of the dance into the development of a *sacred gaze* that maintains an awareness of the *Western male gaze*, which often is entangled with the *imperial gaze*. As I enter a pedagogical space to teach, I immediately begin to share my phenomenology as a faith-based Hindu. For example, at invited campus-wide lectures, I play Hindu chants on a speaker to create an aura that attempts to share who I am as a faith-based Hindu and invite a spiritual connection. Then, as I begin the lecture, I de-Orientalize

misconceptions about Hinduism in an effort to develop an awareness of an Eastern epistemological framework. After, I share the main aspects of the ethic of Hindu dance and dance gestures based on Hindu scriptures. Following this, I explain the dance using gestures before I engage in the dance piece. As I do this, I ask viewers to comprehend the nature of the bodily movement. Finally, before I dance, I request that the viewers view the dance with a *sacred gaze* that keeps an Eastern epistemological framework and the intention of the dance piece in mind.

If I sense a *sacred gaze*, then I feel that viewers view me as a *spiritual other*. The term *spiritual other* essentially indicates that I am a faith-based Hindu devoted to Hinduism in a manner that wishes to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. Again, it is crucial to note that as a *spiritual other*, I do not wish to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. What I am saying is that I ask non-Hindus to employ a *sacred gaze* to understand how my personal dimension as a faith-based Hindu causes me to start from a Hindu theological perspective as I aim to represent Hinduism in a de-Orientalized manner in academia. While I believe in Hinduism, I do not demand that non-Hindus share my same epistemological religious framework. Rather, I ask non-Hindus to enter into the covenant of the *sacred gaze* to understand my epistemological framework as a faith-based Hindu and how that influences my ability to use Kuchipudi dance as an educator who aims to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism with postcolonial realities in mind.

For this purpose, I ask viewers to maintain a *de-Orientalized educational gaze*, which develops through the *sacred gaze*, to view me as a *spiritual other* who represents the educational dimension of Hinduism through Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance.

Regardless of whether or not viewers enter into the covenant of the *sacred gaze* as I teach, I still must remain a *spiritual other* because as a *spiritual other* I feel guarded against the entangled *Western male gaze* and *imperial gaze*. First, I will explain the Hindu dance concept of abhinaya (facial expressions) that helps me maintain the role of a *spiritual other*. Second, I consider it necessary to share my phenomenological experience that caused me to develop a theory of the *spiritual other*. Third, I focus my attention on my concern of evangelization that could possibly occur while I embody a *spiritual other*.

While there are many factors that contribute to the dancer's embodiment of a *spiritual other*, I specifically focus on abhinaya (facial expressions) as a key component. Once viewers enter into the covenant of the *sacred gaze*, then viewers will understand the spiritual significance of the abhinaya. On the contrary, the lack of a *sacred gaze* has the potential to reject the spiritual significance of the abhinaya and instead endorse an artificial actor's fictionalized role in drama. The dancer uses abhinaya[324] to become characters within the dance and also express what is happening phenomenologically. Kalanidhi Narayanan, a scholar of Kuchipudi dance, writes about abhinaya.[325]

> "Human beings are very emotional and the same person experiences different moods in different circumstances. Bharata Muni has carefully studied this and wrote them down dividing them into eight moods, the ninth santha rasa has been added later by others. Each mood or rasa is experienced and expressed through the corresponding bhavas (feelings), vibhavas, (causes) anubhavas (consequents) and vyabhichari bhavas (complementaries)."

Abhinaya is a form of expressions that Indian classical dancers use to convey emotions. The author refers to the great Sage Bharata[326] who is commended as the author of the famous Hindu text of dance, the *Natya Shastra*. As mentioned in the above quote, Bharata wrote about the first eight emotions and other scholars added the ninth emotion.

Narayanan[327] writes about the nine common emotions that are a part of the dancer's abhinaya.

> "What is Abhinaya? It is an outward expression of the innerself. What one thinks, and feels using the vocabulary of A) Angika – Gesture B) Vachika –words C) Aharya – decorations D) Satvika – emotions. When we talk about abhinaya, the concept of Navarasa comes into the picture. Navarasas or the nine rasas form the full range of human sentiments or emotions.
> a) Sringara – Love
> b) Veera – Valour
> c) Bhaya – Fear
> d) Bibhatsa – Repungance
> e) Karuna – Compassion
> f) Adbhuta – Wonder
> g) Raudra – Anger
> h) Hasya – Humour
> The last one is Shantha serenity."

Sage Bharata does not indicate that classical dancers are limited to the portrayal of one emotion at a time. While sometimes dancers convey one emotion, there are times when there is an entanglement of emotions. Many of the Kuchipudi Indian classical dances stem from a re-enactment of the historical Hindu epics. Here, the covenant of the *sacred gaze* is crucial because it allows viewers to understand the history of Hinduism as opposed to the Orientalized knowledge of a fictionalized world religion that often provokes an *imperial gaze*. In many cases, the dancer not only recreates historical Hindu scenes, but also conveys an original piece to the viewers based on the dancer's ability to become the characters within Hindu history. Even though the scene occurred in the history of Hinduism or the dancer danced the scene previously, each scene is unique because of the dancer's ability to live in the present moment. This is precisely because Kuchipudi dancers use abhinaya to embody the characters within the dance and to

express phenomenology. This is not a mere "display" of emotion. The abhinaya that I express as I dance allows me to use my entire being to embody a *spiritual other*.

For example, during a theatrical solo dance recital[328], I danced a famous historical scene from the infamous *Shri Hanuman Ashtakam* found in the famous Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*.[329] In this scene, the Princess Sita, kidnapped by the demon King Ravana, receives her husband Shri Rama's ring from Hanumanji in the guarded royal garden. Hanumanji hid in the Ashoka tree as he waited for the appropriate time to relate Shri Rama's message to Sita Maa. Shri Rama, a Hindu incarnation of the Supreme Being, asked Hanumanji to reassure Sita Maa of the planned rescue. Shri Rama and a loyal army planned to invade the demon kingdom and rescue Sita Maa. As I danced as Sita Maa who sat in distress under the Ashoka tree, I cried as I looked at Hanumanji and with shaking hands received Shri Rama's ring. Perhaps, my shaking hands that received the ring were a sign of Sita Maa's nervousness. I am not sure if this is the case because I did not plan the abhinaya (expressions), but rather the abhinaya flowed as I danced. I did not plan to cry or plan for my hands to shake, but my body reacted in that manner because the emotions naturally flowed from me as the dancer as I danced as a *spiritual other*.

To build on this further, I felt a variety of emotions as Sita Maa. The smile on my face conveyed my happiness to receive Shri Rama's ring, yet I was filled with fear since I was not with Shri Rama. It is imperative to question the feeling of fear. If Sita Maa knows Shri Rama will save her, then why should she be fearful? This is important to ask because the dancer's answer impacts on the way the dancer will phenomenologically experience the abhinaya, which will in turn affect the epistemology that develops. The

goal here is not to change the historical Hindu scenes but rather to understand the scenes with a de-Orientalized epistemology that allows the dancer to embody the characters. Without the covenant that accompanies the *sacred gaze*, viewers of this particular scene may engage in a complex dynamic of the intertwining *Western male gaze* and *imperial gaze* that reduces this scene to a mythical fantasy of the East that lusts for the female in need of male protection. The covenant of the *sacred gaze* would attempt to understand the spiritual significance of this scene whereas the *Western male gaze* would further provocatize the female. In addition, without the *sacred gaze*, the *imperial gaze* may aim to civilize the animalizing males who lust for the females. To prevent further Orientalism, I ask viewers to enter into a covenant that accompanies a *sacred gaze*.

The kidnapped princess Sita Maa sits under the demon king, Ravana's, Asoka tree. Sita Maa secretly receives the ring of her husband, Shri Rama, from the valorous servant of Shri Rama. This great servant of Shri Rama is Hanumanji.

As I dance this scene, tears fill my eyes but yet a faint smile is found on my face. My hands shook as I received the ring from Hanumanji.

I cannot ensure that the same phenomenological experience will occur again when I dance the same scene, but I can say that the next time will be unique as I let the character's emotions emerge from me as the dancer. Because the abhinaya of the dance

emerges from the dancer, Kuchipudi dance educators are encouraged to teach the nine rasas to students but should not dictate which emotions students need to convey during the dance. It is vital to teach students about the historical epics of Hinduism and also philosophize with students about the epics because once dancers are aware of the history of the epics and have thought about how the characters within the epics would feel, then the dancers' abhinaya will emerge naturally as the dancer becomes a *spiritual other*.

It is crucial for abhinaya to occur naturally because abhinaya helps the dancer to become a *spiritual other* as the dancer connects to a Supreme Being.

> "Dance is considered a way of devotion. Abhinaya especially takes you very close to the Almighty."[330]

Through abhinaya, Kuchipudi dancers emerge as various characters, which include Gods and Goddesses who emerge from One Supreme Being in addition to demons, kings, queens, etc. In this sense, the dance is meant to serve as a form of Hindu devotion. It is intended to connect the dancer to a Supreme Being. This is precisely where my concern of evangelism arises. I worry that non-Hindus may sense that I, as a *spiritual other*, use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as a faith-based pedagogical tool that aims to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. This is not my goal as a *spiritual other*. Here, I share a specific presentation where I deeply worried about possible evangelization that could occur as I become a *spiritual other*.

During an invited lecture and dance presentation, for the Department of Philosophy and Religion's *Religion and the Arts* series, at Montclair State University in October 2012,[331] I questioned my pedagogy as a *spiritual other*. I worried that the viewers of the lecture and dance might have felt "evangelized', for the lack of a better

term, because I engaged in my own faith-based contemplative practices as a Hindu dancer. For instance, *Jai Radha Madhav*,[332] which is a calming Hindu chant, played on the loud speakers as people entered the lecture hall space. During this time before the event, I also prayed in a Hindu sacred space that I created in the venue as a part of my ethic as a Hindu dancer. Essentially, I feel that I maintained a *sacred gaze* as a Hindu dancer in a manner that helped to shield me from the intricacies of the multidimensional *Western male gaze* and the *imperialist gaze*. The *sacred gaze* caused me to acknowledge who I am as a Hindu dancer as I engaged in Hindu contemplative practices without shame.

My faith in Hinduism came through in my presentation and dance even though I did not plan for this to occur. I shared this concern of my mine with Montclair State University alumni, Chris Bartlett. He helped me come to terms with my role as a *spiritual other*. Chris Bartlett seemed to maintain a *sacred gaze* as he told me that he appreciated the way I engaged in my own faith-based practice as a Hindu, but in a manner that was not "faith-pushing". As an atheist, he said that he appreciated learning about Hinduism through dance and seeing the role my own phenomenology plays in who I am as a Hindu dancer. A professor from the department who was present during this dialogue agreed with Chris Bartlett. While I engaged in faith-based practices as a Hindu dancer, I did not evangelize, for the lack of a better term, the viewers of the lecture and dance into adopting Hindu ideals. Instead, I shared the faith-based part of me as a Hindu dancer with the viewers and they shared with me too during the question and answer session. To this extent, the role of a *spiritual other* is to maintain a *sacred gaze* and

warrant a *sacred gaze* that is needed to educate in a de-Orientalized overlapping pedagogical space, which aims to understand the West and the East. Although I as a *spiritual other* may provoke a *sacred gaze*, this does not mean that the ramifications of the converging *Western male gaze* and *imperial gaze* are not present. With the complexities of the intersecting gazes in mind, I pay close attention to my phenomenology as a spiritual other.

As I use a self-study methodology to study my phenomenology, I realize that my original concern of evangelizing the viewers is still necessary to consider. Regardless of whether or not evangelizing is beneficial, my purpose as a Hindu dancer is not to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. Even if I consider myself in the role of a *spiritual other*, this role becomes artificial if I use my faith-based practices as a Hindu dancer to demand that the viewers of the dance develop a Hindu epistemological framework through a so-called *sacred gaze* that would further an Eastern notion of imperialism. In this instance, this artificial role of the *spiritual other* instead becomes a colonizing, Orientalizing other who teaches in an Orientalized overlapping pedagogical space. My goal as an educator is to remain in the role of a *spiritual other* who uses Kuchipudi Indian classical dance as a pedagogical tool to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism as I engage in my own, natural, faith-based Hindu practices but remain careful not to engage in “faith-pushing”.

Sometimes, I sense a *sacred gaze* from the viewers of the dance as I engage in the presentation and dance as a *spiritual other*. It is my contention that the *sacred gaze* develops as viewers enter a covenant that aims to understand spiritual significance as explained by Morgan. The viewers begin to endorse a religious framework to view the

dance. I sense this gaze as I pay close attention to my phenomenology in a pedagogical space. While I do not know what the viewers think nor do I claim to understand their phenomenological experience, I can say that the sensitivity they display by simply remaining quiet and focused as I dance shows respect for who I am as a dancer. Even if the complexities of the *Western male gaze* and im*perial gaze* remain, the *sacred gaze* is the most present gaze that I sense.

For instance, at the abovementioned Montclair State University lecture, I sensed that the viewers paid close attention to me, as their eyes seemed to pierce me with a sense of curiosity that was eager to learn. The viewers seemed to collectively enter into the covenant of a *sacred gaze* as they quietly paid close attention to my lecture and dance presentation. My body sensed this *sacred gaze* as a peaceful aura seemed to fill the learning space. Everyone, including me, seemed to be in a meditative state that created a peaceful aura in the room. For me, it felt as if I were in a holy place. As I danced, I looked up at the lights in the lecture hall and felt as if Mata (Mother) Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of wealth and prosperity who bestows light, shined down directly on me in a manner that blessed me as a successful educator. My body felt as if it were a vessel blessed by a higher power in a way that allowed me to share my faith in a manner that didn't engage in faith-pushing but rather engaged in teaching and learning. Here, I feel that I maintained a *sacred gaze* that allowed me to become a *spiritual other*.

The types of questions the viewers asked during the question and answer period caused me to feel that they viewed the dance with a *sacred gaze*. For instance, one question, which arose, and arises frequently, is, "Do you consider yourself to be a Guru

according to the Hindu tradition?" This type of question seems to arise due to a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that maintains a *sacred gaze* with the aim to understand Hinduism through dance. In addition, this type of question shows that the viewers appreciate the religious dimension of the dance, thus endorsing an epistemological framework that is open to otherness. In this instance, I sense a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that maintains a *sacred gaze* with the aim to develop a de-Orientalized understanding of Hinduism. This inspired a *hybrid gaze* that caused me to think about my role as an educator in the West. After the question and answer session, I felt a sense of enthusiasm as one of the department professors and her two daughters defined, through movement, some of the dance steps that were part of my dance. This was a profound moment for me because I felt that non-Hindus were able to read classical Indian dance, which provides a whole new type of literacy to the West. In this moment, it seemed that the professor, the professor's daughters, and I entered into a covenant to maintain a *sacred gaze* that wished to understand the spiritual significance of the particular dance gestures. Here again, the *sacred gaze* inspired a delicate, *hybrid gaze* that caused me to think about whether or not I could teach Hindu dance to non-Hindus without furthering Orientalist agendas.

At the same lecture, a discomforting situation arose as a male undergraduate friend of mine gestured to touch my jewels that adorned my body. I felt very nervous because this was my first invited lecture and I did not know how to handle the embrace of a non-Hindu while in a highly sacred religious attire. Goosebumps seemed to rise on my skin as a shiver overcame me in this tough moment where the gazes intersect. I was in an

overlapping pedagogical space where I was still Western even though I had Eastern religious attire on. This struggle felt intense to me because I wished to maintain a *sacred gaze* as a *spiritual other* in a manner that does not enforce Hindu ideals but rather employs a true *sacred gaze* that understands the differences of other cultures that surround me. For me, the *sacred gaze* moves beyond the spiritual significance of Hindu dance to an aim to understand the spiritual significance of others as part of humanity. Another male undergraduate friend of ours, Sean O'Connor, stopped him from touching me. Our friend explained that my body was adorned with sacred jewels that non-vegetarians, especially those who have eaten beef, should not touch.

Even though traditionally, Hindus do not eat meat, seafood, or eggs when they participate in any religious Hindu services, I do not expect Westerners to maintain this ideal. Moreover, Hindus do not eat beef because Hindus worship the cow as Shri Krishna, an incarnation of the Supreme Being in Hinduism, did during the ancient age of Dwapara yug. I am a vegetarian, but most of my friends are not vegetarians. I do not wish to impose my vegetarian religious ideals onto my non-vegetarian friends. In addition, I do not wish to imply that my friends are impure because they are meat-eaters who do not conform to Hindu traditions. My body felt discomfort as I was placed in an overlapping pedagogical space where I wished to maintain fidelity to the Hindu traditions of dance as a *spiritual other* but also respect the epistemologies of non-Hindus through the covenant of the *sacred gaze*. I thanked Sean O'Connor for explaining this to our friend, but also allowed our friend to embrace me because I felt in my heart, after years of

knowing him, that his *sacred gaze* overshadowed the presence of a *Western male gaze* and the implying exoticism.

While the rituals are important to me, it seems unfair to impose Hindu ideals onto non-Hindus when the goal should be to acknowledge that we are part of a hybrid nature where we must blend to grow together as part of humanity. I felt that my faith as a Hindu was tested as I decided to move outside of Hindu boundaries to embrace my friend while also within Hindu boundaries. It seems to me that this is the nature of a *spiritual other* who maintains a true *sacred gaze* that does not simply adhere to the rituals but rather acknowledges the complexity of the rituals when in a non-Hindu setting. This is the overlapping pedagogical space that I must remember that I am a part of as I educate non-Hindus in the West.

Now, I must point out that this does not mean that I do not respect the sacredness of the Hindu religious traditions[333] that accompany Hindu dance. In the overlapping pedagogical space that accompanies a lecture hall setting, I wear traditional Kuchipudi dance jewelry that I am comfortable with viewers of the dance touching. However, I do have a kosher, for the lack of a better term, set of Kuchipudi dance jewelry that I wear when I enter a theatrical space to teach. I do not stop individuals from embracing me when I wear these jewels, but rather I wear them because when I am in a theatrical space, I teach in a pedagogical space of mirroring that reflects a connection that I have to a Supreme Being in a manner that serves to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism through dance. In this pedagogical space of mirroring there is less opportunity for non-Hindus to embrace me and more opportunity for me to uphold the Hindu traditional rituals, which

will best serve to educate non-Hindus about traditional Hindu dance. I do ask my non-Hindu friends who assist if they would be comfortable adhering to certain Hindu ideals but I do not enforce these ideals upon the stage crew. I also am careful to remain sensitive to non-Hindus when they wish to embrace me because I do not want them to feel unholy or impure. To cause non-Hindus to feel like this would display a lack of a *sacred gaze* as a *spiritual other*.

*Exotic Other*

I now turn to relate how I use the term *exotic other* to describe how I feel as a Kuchipudi dancer when I sense that I am Orientalized by the viewers of the dance. While I tend to view myself as a *spiritual other*, sometimes I sense that the viewers see me as an *exotic other*. The term *exotic other* essentially indicates that I sense an *Orientalized gaze* that views me as a foreign, appealing creature. This *Western male gaze,*[334] which may also be tied to an *imperial gaze,*[335] could either block the *educational de-Orientalized gaze* or serve as motivation to develop a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* from the viewers.

First, I will focus my attention on the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* that blocks an *educational de-Orientalized gaze*. What concerns me in this case is that I feel the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* sometimes block my ability to serve as educator who uses Kuchipudi Indian classical dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. This is because the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* directly affect my embodied experience of the dance. If the viewers view the dance as mere acrobats and theatrics that dramatize so-called Hindu mythology, then I fail to engage in de-

Orientalized pedagogy but rather unnervingly promote Orientalism. My embodied experience is reduced to an Orientalist object, due to the intensity of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze*, that unintentionally adds to Orientalist and colonizing agendas. In this case, my body often feels scarred as a delicate female who is intellectually fragile even though I am a female who is an intellectual scholar. I often sense a tainted gloom that fills the learning space where I am vulnerable as prey to the predators who aim to colonize me with Orientalist agendas based on a long history of imperialism. This creates a deep sense of discomfort that causes me to realize the urgency of my scholarship in a Western world where I am an intellectual female scholar who must rise above this unnerving feeling that potentially occurs when I sense that I am not able to maintain a *sacred gaze* because of the intricacies of the *Western male gaze* and *imperial gaze*. I hope to prevent this bodily feeling as I use my embodied, phenomenological experience to move the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* to a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that will enter into a covenant to develop a *sacred gaze*.

Second, I concentrate on how the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* may serve as motivation to develop an *educational de-Orientalized gaze.* When the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* occurs with an intention to engage in a de-Orientalized knowledge development of Hinduism through Kuchipudi Indian classical dance, then these gazes do not necessarily block an *educational de-Orientalized gaze*. This is because there is an intention to understand with a de-Orientalized perspective. Through dialogical inquiry with credible scholars and research from primary Hindu sources, there is an avenue for de-Orientalization to occur. I call this the u-turn journey that moves

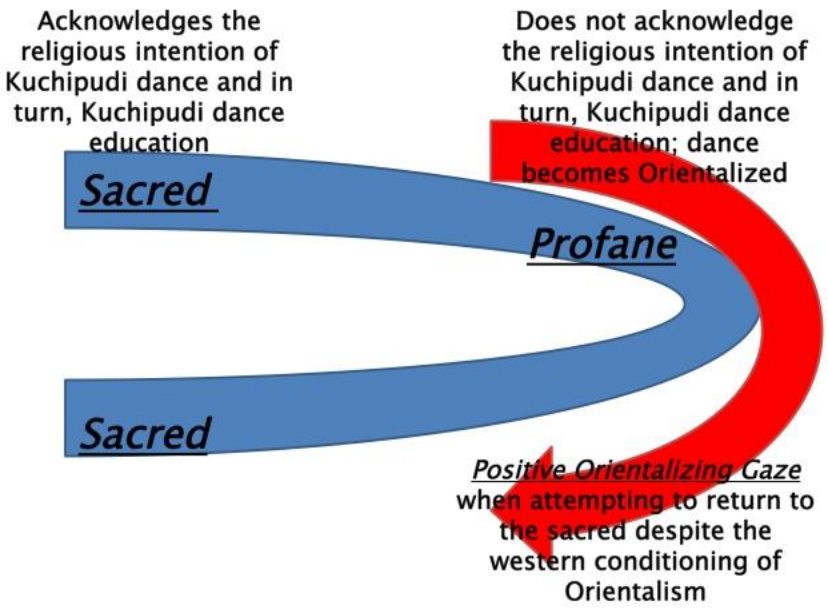
from an Orientalist perspective to a de-Orientalized perspective. Essentially, while the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* may seem negative, it has the potential to be positive if the gaze of Orientalization aims to move beyond Orientalism back to a *sacred gaze*.

The problem here is that Indian classical Hindu dance has moved from the sacred to the profane, in many cases, due to Orientalism. Yet Hindu dance has the potential to correct this ludicrous error as Hindu dance helps to move the gazes back from the profane to the sacred. Evidently, dance may not be completely sacred or completely profane, but it should aim to be more sacred rather than more profane in the case of Hindu dance. In many cases, the dance is both sacred and profane simultaneously in a hybrid space. I experienced this when I danced the *Mahabharat Sabdam* dance at a religious Hindu service[336] in July 2013 in Pennsylvania.

In the *Mahabharat Sabdam* dance based on the famous historical *Mahabharat*[337] epic, I embody the female princess, Draupadi. I also personify Draupadi's brother-in-law Dushasana who attempts to disrobe Draupadi in the royal court. Shri Krishna, a Hindu incarnation of the Supreme Being, saves Draupadi because she prays to Shri Krishna with intense faith. While Dushasana pulls Draupadi's saari (a type of Indian clothing), Shri Krishna blesses Draupadi so that more clothes adorn her body. Draupadi is saved from the humiliation of a public disrobing. My body suffers with distress as I dance this scene. I felt disgusted as I exemplify Dushasana who displays his muscles and power as he pulls powerfully at Draupadi's saari. I felt evil as I embodied this profane character who has no regard for the sacredness of the female body of Draupadi. My body seemed to have a

heavy weight as I pulled the saari with extreme force. A vicious look came across my face. I could hear my feet stomp on the ground as I even subconsciously scared myself with this sound. When I turned in the dance to embody Draupadi, I shivered with tears in my eyes as I hollered during the dance because I felt an intense pain in my body. It was as if I anticipated being raped in public. I felt as if I were trapped in my body as a weak, fragile passive female who had no place to go. My body experienced extreme tightness as I turned slowly in the dance in gestures that covered my breasts with tears in my eyes to the point where I could barely see. I soon embodied Draupadi who prays with faith to Shri Krishna, which began to calm the intensity of my body. In the dance, I then show the body of Draupadi as covered with cloth due to the blessings of Shri Krishna. This is an example of a time when dance, and I as the dancer, are both sacred and profane simultaneously. This dance is at many times degrading, but at the same time it is shows that good triumphs over evil.

Overall, while many Orientalists are conditioned to think of Indian classical dance as a sensual form, Orientalists who aim to understand the dance epistemologically from an Eastern perspective based on an Eastern intention of dance are on the u-turn journey from the profane back to the sacred. Eventually, they may rid themselves of Orientalism as Hindu dance returns from the profane to the sacred.




In this instance, the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* are not always negative, but rather become positive when moving from the profane back to the sacred.

To build on this with an example, I would like to share my experiences at the *Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion Annual Regional Meeting* in New Brunswick, New Jersey during March 2011, which I referred to earlier in this chapter.[338] As I mentioned, I dressed as Princess Mirabai because I was presenting a paper on her and Princess Satyabhama. Before my presentation, I went to a keynote lecture held during lunch. As I walked in barefoot and dressed as Princess Mira, I found a seat at the front of the room. A kind gentleman stood up to give me a better seat.

Another gentleman left his seat and brought me a plate of food. After lunch, one of the gentlemen, who became a colleague of mine, offered to help me carry all of my heavy bags for the rest of the afternoon. As time passed, he eventually said to me, "Sabrina, do you think you would be treated so well if you were overweight and had smelly feet."

At that point, I realized that I was an *exotic other* who was treated on a pedestal because of my seemingly exotic intellectual being. These comments reduced me as a dancer to a cultural and sexual object as I sensed the *Western male gaze* that intertwined with a *sacred gaze*, which hoped to understand who I am as a Hindu dancer. The individual seemed to have an entangled *imperial gaze* based on an erotic understanding of who I was as a female dancer of Eastern descent since it implies that I must maintain a certain sensual body image that warrants the *Western male gaze*. While this comment is troublesome, in the moment, I felt very grateful that I do have a certain body and features that the individual pointed out. There are many people who do not have a leg, an arm, or a full-figured face but yet move forward with life. I am not saying that handicapped individuals cannot move forward with sports and dance despite disabilities. What I am saying is that I am thankful for my bodily limbs and facial features that allow me to engage in dance. I do not wish my body to provoke the *Western male gaze*, but at the same time, I am thankful that I do have a body that allows me to dance as a woman of Indian descent with a rich history.

The individual seemed to exhibit a form of Orientalization where there is a possibility for de-Orientalization to occur. We cannot change the nature of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* that has been conditioned in the West for hundreds of

years. Thus, perhaps this is a form of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* that is a direct effect of years of the influence of Orientalism. This form of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* may aim to move back to the sacred, despite the nature of this type of gaze. Since then, I sense that my above-mentioned colleague has developed a de-Orientalized interpretation of Hinduism. I feel that I engaged in very successful invited classroom presentations for my colleague's *Introduction to Religious Studies* classes as I encouraged my colleague to be aware of concealed Orientalism. We revealed concealed Orientalist interpretations of Hinduism within Western texts used in Religious Studies classes. My colleague and I have become professional friends that aim to understand the essence of each other's scholarly work. Thus, even if I initially sense a *Western male gaze* and an *imperial gaze* from viewers of the dance, my embodied, phenomenological experience has the potential to help me move in the direction of using a de-Orientalize pedagogy to move the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* to an *educational, de-Orientalized gaze*. In the above example, this occurred over a period of time.

Now, I realize that I use the term "exotic" in a rather provocative way. I sense a positive connotation of the term when viewers send me emails after I present and dance. Many use the term "exotic" to refer to my costumes and the description of the dance. In these instances, the term "exotic" is used harmlessly on the part of the viewers because I feel they lack a more adequate term. However, there are concealed connotations here in the term "exotic" that further Orientalist agendas. It is crucial for me to relate why this term is problematic.

When the term “exotic” is used to describe me as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, I unnervingly become conflated with the sphere of “exotic dance” and “exotic dancers”. “Exotic dance” is a genre of dance in the West that involves dance by “exotic dancers”. The connotation of “exotic dance” in the West involves dance as entertainment to provoke a particular, sensual, erotic gaze from the viewers. These dances may include pole dancing, strip teasing, nude dancing, etc. It is important for me to mention that the media makes a distinction between exotic dancing and nude dancing. Exotic dance includes some so-called clothing such as pasties and g-strings whereas nude dance does not include any clothing at all.[339]

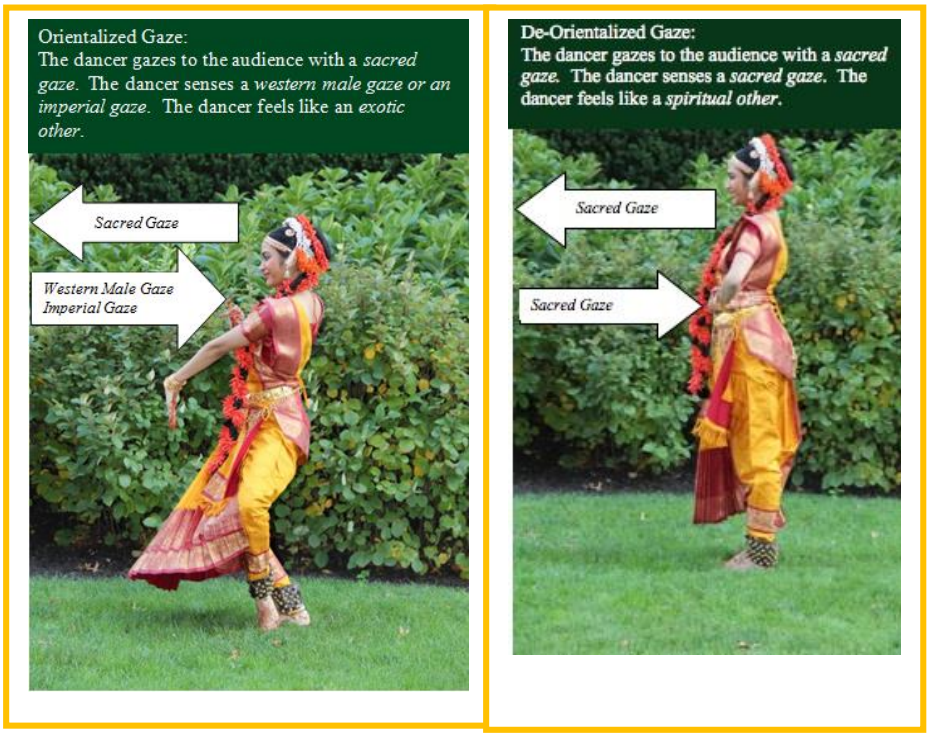
While Indian classical Hindu dance aims to tame the senses, the “exotic dances” that the media relates aims to provoke the sensual, erotic senses. Even if some “exotic dancers” claim to use “exotic dance” for religious purposes, the overall genre of “exotic dance” does not correspond to the genre of Hindu dance. The body is not used the same way in “exotic dance” when compared to Hindu dance. The West develops an interpretation of “exotic dance” based on how the media and the public come to define the term.[340] Hence, I ask the viewers of Hindu dance to show sensitivity when thinking of Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as “exotic”. Even though the costumes are colorful and unfamiliar, which may warrant the usage of the dictionary definition of the term “exotic”, the media’s portrayal of the term causes me to phenomenologically feel discomfort when the term is used to describe who I am as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer.

I realize that I add to the media's current usage of the term "exotic". This is because I view "exotic dance" based on how the media portrays this dance genre. Furthermore, it is important to have a term to describe who I am *not* just as it is crucial to have a term to describe who I *am*. There is a need for the term *exotic other* because it describes who I am not, just as the term *spiritual other* describes who I am. While scholars are invited to attempt to move this usage of the term "exotic" to a positive usage, please keep in mind the way I use the term for the purposes of this philosophical project.

The main question for this discourse is how can Kuchipudi dance promote an *educational gaze* that is a critical, self-reflexive position that intends to overcome the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* and also rise above the isolation of religions and cultures? This gaze is open to otherness and aware of the Orientalist tendencies that have the potential to exoticize Hindu dance. Even though I, as a Kuchipudi dancer dance as a *spiritual other*, my phenomenological experience may not serve as a receptor of an *educational de-Orientalized educational gaze* because I may not sense that the viewers perceive me as a *spiritual other*.

For me, I feel that I dance successfully if I serve as a receptor of a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that perceives me as a *spiritual other*. I often feel a sense of contentment when this happens. My body feels at ease as if cool, soothing water calms my soul. I have a sense of confidence that radiates because I am comfortable sharing who I am as a Westerner of Eastern descent who uses Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to educate. I believe that I do not dance successfully if I serve as a receptor of the overshadowing *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* that perceives me as an *exotic*

*other*. In this sense, I feel that I succumb to the Orientalization of the West. At one point in time, this had severe negative effects on my body. When I sensed a *Western male gaze* and an *imperial gaze*, my body would tremor with nervousness and a baffled, frightened expression would sometimes come across my face. This, in turn, would affect my presentation and dance because I lacked the confidence needed during the presentations. At this point in time, I feel that I am able to confront the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* in a manner that does not cause me to succumb to the nature of these complex gazes. I maintain a sense of confidence, with my body in a calm state, as I confront the potentially harmful gazes.



For instance, after an invited lecture[341] at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey during October 2012, a group of professors approached me to thank me for my presentation and dance on the famous Hindu historical epic, the *Ramayana*. A male professor asked if I would consider performing again at Drew University with a belly dancer. In this moment, I felt that the male professor missed the distinctions between Kuchipudi Indian classical *Hindu* dance and Middle Eastern belly dance. While I did not elaborate on the distinctions between Kuchipudi dance and Middle Eastern belly dance during my presentation, I do feel that I provided a clear framework of Hindu dance in general. My body felt calm as I comfortably shared my perspective with this professor in an effort to confront the overshadowing *Western male gaze*. I told this professor that the type of dance I perform is very sacred to me as a Hindu. I would not feel comfortable exercising Hindu dance as mere culture as a part of a performance. Furthermore, I would not want to promote Orientalism by presenting Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance in an Orientalized manner in conjunction with Middle Eastern belly dance.

A dance professor from Drew University, who also was a part of the conversation, said that she does not even feel comfortable using the word "performance" to describe what I do because it really is not a performance where I am acting out something. It is more of a religious embodied spirituality that develops from the inner core of my soul. Even though there was a sacred Hindu prayer space in the lecture hall and a Hindu chant to accompany the entrance and exit of the viewers, this male professor still did not seem to understand the religious nature of who I am as a Hindu dancer whereas the female professor did seem to. While I feel the male professor maintained an overshadowing

*Western male gaze*, the female dance professor helped me to feel that I was able to capture the strong presence of a *sacred gaze* during my presentation and dance.

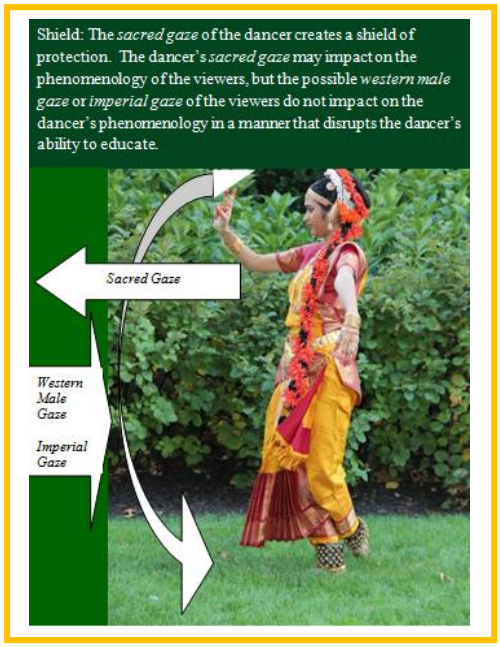
My phenomenology may not necessarily fit into a compartment of success and failure. Instead, it is important to note that there are times when I need to use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as pedagogy over a period of time to provoke a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that serves to reveal concealed Orientalism. In these instances, I feel that I am on the road to success as I use Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy.

*The Shield*

My main concern, though, is that my perceptions of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* have the potential to impact on my phenomenology in a manner that jeopardizes my ability to educate. For this purpose, it is crucial to determine how to protect myself from the *Western male gaze* and *imperial gaze*. I do not claim that I should ignore my perception of the *Western male gaze* and *imperial gaze*, because that further enables Orientalism. Rather, I need to confront the discomfort of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* to disable Orientalism. My problem here is that the sophistication of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* could disrupt my ability to use Kuchipudi dance to educate non-Hindus because my perception of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* may scar my body. These gazes scar my body if I become solely an object of entertainment whose task is to aesthetically please a Western audience. The scars leave me incapable of teaching due to the single focus on the ornamentalized body. Thus, there is a need for me to protect myself from the scars of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* while also confronting the nature of these

gazes. I do not view this as a battle, but rather see this as a part of the way I use de-Orientalized pedagogy.

Essentially, I need to maintain a *sacred gaze* that radiates enough to form a shield of protection from the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze*. The *shield* develops organically only if I view myself as a *spiritual other*, which causes me to develop a *sacred gaze*. To create the *shield*, I need to focus on my inner divinity, the divinity within Kuchipudi dance, and the divinity within Hinduism. For this purpose, I engage in the contemplative practices of Hinduism as I uphold the dance ethic as a Hindu dancer. Once a shield of protection develops, then I may use a *sacred gaze* to gaze at the viewers in a manner that has the potential to impact on their phenomenology. However, the shield prevents the possible *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* of the viewers from impacting on my phenomenology as a *spiritual other*. This is not simply a psychological tool that allows me to use Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy. On the contrary, the shield develops only when I embrace the feeling of divinity as a faith-based Hindu.




My faith in Hinduism fills the space that I dance in as a *spiritual other*. Essentially, my religious belief in Hinduism's history, and not mere mythology, helps me to create a shield of protection to guard me from the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze* as I dance. The shield organically develops as I connect directly to a Supreme Being through an *upward gaze* and *downward gaze* that occurs during my religious dance experience. Many times I look up as I dance because I sense a divine presence. During an *upward gaze*, I feel as if many Gods and Goddesses emerge from One Supreme Being[342] to protect me as the dancer and guard the performance. As I look down during a *downward gaze*, I am reminded of the sacredness of the earth that I am bound to as a Hindu dancer. This phenomenological feeling aligns with the dance ethic of Hinduism.

I do not sense a divine presence around me simply because I must in order to uphold the ethic of Hindu dance. Rather, my phenomenology genuinely senses a divine presence around me when I dance as a *spiritual other*. My body feels at ease in a space where I feel comfortable to embody Hinduism through Kuchipudi Indian classical dance without the worry of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze,* albeit these gazes still might be present. I feel that I am protected from harm due to the peaceful aura that fills the entire space that I dance in. It is important to note that the divine presence that I feel from the many Gods and Goddesses that emerge from One Supreme Being in Hinduism remains closest to me inside of the protective shield.

My body feels as if it is a sacred vessel that has a purpose to share my innermost self with viewers of the dance. I feel, many times, as if I am in a profound moment of divinity that brings me close to a Supreme Being even though I am consciously in the realm of the Earth. It is as if the divine presence becomes embodied in me to guide me as I engage in Hindu dance. This is not a schizophrenic hallucination or exorcist scenario where my soul becomes contaminated with evil demons. On the contrary, this a conscious religious experience that grants me a divine presence to protect me from exoticism and guide me as I trust my body to dance choreographed Hindu dances without thinking about the dance movements. This philosophical theory is based on my personal experience during theatre recitals. Specifically, I paid close attention to my phenomenological experience during my first theatrical recital.

When I performed my *Rangapravesam*[343] (Indian classical dance debut) in 2004, I danced eight traditional Kuchipudi dances, which were very lengthy pieces. The recital

began with a puja (religious worship) on stage with the curtains closed. As I danced with the traditional Kuchipudi costumes during the recital, I felt I was a *spiritual other* who embodied the characters that lived in the ancient times of Hinduism. As a *spiritual other*, I felt the presence of divinity in the form of the Gods and Goddesses that emerged from One Supreme Being all around me in the space where I danced. I even felt the presence of the demons, who once killed at the hands of a Supreme Being, redeemed themselves. As the dancer, my *upward gaze* to what many may consider the heavenly regions and *downward gaze* to the earth, which I feel the stage sometimes represents, helped me to feel a connection to a Supreme Being that is like a protective shield. The effects of my *upward gaze* and *downward gaze* that occurred during the performance served as a shield from any Orientalization that may have occurred from the viewers. Even if some saw me as an *exotic other*, the presence of the *spiritual other* was so strong that it did not cause me to experience feelings of being an *exotic other*.

Because I became a *spiritual other*, I felt a complete state of contentment. This phenomenological feeling of contentment enables the shield to remain at ease in the sense that the shield does not need to be used to protect me from harm. What I am saying is that the shield provides me with protection from the phenomenological feeling of the *Western male gaze* and the *imperial gaze*. However, the shield is unnecessary when I am not in harm's way. In this instance, I may dance with a shield at ease as I engage in a *sacred gaze* to the viewers of the dance and in turn, I phenomenologically predominantly sense a *sacred gaze* from the viewers.

As you may recall, I create the shield through my phenomenological experience as a *spiritual other* who seeks One Supreme Being to emerge in different forms to protect me as the dancer and guard the performance. I sense the divine presence in front of me as a shield as I dance. I feel that the many Gods and Goddesses who emerge to protect me as the dancer and guard the performance shield me from intertwining harmful gazes but the shield is at ease when the shield allows non-harmful gazes to reach me.

I felt that my shield was at ease when I danced *Ramayana Shabdam* at the *Second Annual Conference of The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education* at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts during a thirty minute presentation.[344] From the moment I entered the conference site, I felt respected. Everyone seemed to genuinely respect one another. When I was dressed in my costume, everyone seemed to know I was going to dance and present. However, no one made me feel exotic in a negative way. I sensed that the participants had a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* that desired to learn more about my scholarly work.

I set the tone for the performance by engaging in a de-Orientalized approach to Hinduism. First, I discussed dance as a language. Then, I explained the particular poses in the *Ramayana Sabdam* dance verbally before I danced. I related the history of the *Ramayana*[345] as a part of Hinduism. Aside from the dance, I also discussed how I engage in a contemplative practice of mindfulness before, during, and after the dance as the dancer. I sensed that the viewers had a basic de-Orientalized understanding of Hinduism.

This dance had a Konukollu, which is when the dancer stands straight, with the hands on the waist, and the big toe of the right foot overlaps on the big toe of the left foot.

The dancer does not move the feet but uses facial expressions as the dancer first hears "ta di to na". Then, the dancer moves forward with only the heels of the feet as the dancer looks explicitly to the viewers and hears the next rhythmic line. This series of steps continues until the rhythm reaches an intense climax. As I performed the Konukollu during my presentation, I could see the viewers. Many sat in a u-shape seating arrangement, at the edge of their seats with interest. Others sat in a lotus-like position on the floor because there were no more seats. Some had red cheeks, which I sensed was due to the excitement. All of this created a powerful aura for me as I gazed toward the viewers and they gazed at me.

I sensed a primarily *sacred gaze* because the viewers seemed to enter into the covenant that aims to understand the spiritual significance of who I am as a dancer. I also felt that I maintained a *sacred gaze* because I wished to understand the spiritual significance of my phenomenology. It was as though an intense burst of energy ran through my body to the point where I was almost making cooing sounds during the dance. While the *Western male gaze* may view this experience as erotic, a *sacred gaze* would aim to understand the spiritual significance of my experience. It was an incredible joy for me to feel strongly connected to a Supreme Being. This was a powerful spiritual energy that seemed to stay with me for days after the conference. During the presentation, my body felt an extreme amount of joy and excitement as opposed to indifference and contentment. I felt like I was radiating with an invigorating enthusiastic energy that eventually filled the entire room with an incredible aura. It was as if I broke through the abovementioned protective shield that surrounded me and allowed the

peaceful aura that filled the space that I danced in to fill the entire room. My phenomenology indicated that I had a *sacred gaze* during the presentation and sensed a *de-Orientalized educational gaze* from the viewers. For this reason, the shield that guarded the presentation and protected me as the dancer was at ease.

*Overall Implications*

The nature of the gazes determines whether or not Orientalist or de-Orientalist knowledge develops. It is imperative to think of how the complexly employed gazes contribute to epistemological knowledge construction. Regardless of the gazes of the viewers, the dancer must not succumb to the pressures of the dance world or the Orientalization of the West that gazes at the dancer as an *exotic other*. In essence, the dancer who acknowledges a postcolonial reality may maintain a postcolonial awareness that helps the dancer fulfill the intention of the dance. Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancers should fulfill an Eastern intention of dance as the dancer becomes a *spiritual other*. Dance traditions within the East and the West can benefit from this theory of the gazes. I applied the theory of the gazes to Kuchipudi Indian classical dance, but the theory of the gazes may be used in other dance traditions and across the disciplines.

# Chapter 6

## Unveiling the Hidden Curriculum of Hindu Metaphysics

In the introduction of this project, I explained how my identity positions me in my self-study. I have a purpose in this world as a Hindu who uses Hindu dance to serve as an educator. It is almost as if my body is a vessel that the Supreme Being uses to teach about Hinduism. The Supreme Being gave me a purpose to fulfill as an interconnected part of this world. Once my purpose is fulfilled, I hope to attain moksha (liberation) and merge back to a Supreme Being. My purpose leads me to experience a Oneness with a Supreme Being, which endorses the Hindu metaphysical view that indicates that there is One Supreme Being. Sometimes this feeling of Oneness with a Supreme Being is provoked as I look at the world's ornaments such as the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars and also feel the touch of a breeze on me.

My self-study data analysis shows that I need to focus on Hindu metaphysics for two primary reasons. First, I begin every presentation, regardless of the pedagogical space, with a description of Hindu metaphysics that conveys the belief in One Supreme Being, because there is a misconception in the West that Hinduism is a polytheistic religion. Second, I feel a sense of Oneness as I live my life as a Hindu, which corresponds to a Hindu metaphysical view that there is One Supreme Being who manifests in different forms, at different times, for different purposes. Those who do not understand Hindu metaphysics based on the primary Hindu scriptures coupled with the feeling of Oneness that the Hindu scriptures endorse do not maintain a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hinduism. Instead, these scholars endorse a hidden curriculum that

incites Orientalism. For this reason as a part of my pedagogical process, I consider it necessary to reveal a Western hidden curriculum of Hindu metaphysics that causes Orientalism to flourish. Once the hidden curriculum is unmasked, then a de-Orientalized epistemological framework that hopes to comprehend Hindu metaphysics based on Hindu scriptures may develop.

Specifically, Western theologians who formulate knowledge claims about the East need to have access to knowledge of the East without Orientalizing it. Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) is a German theologian who presents a clear example of Orientalism in his book *The Idea of the Holy An Inquiry Into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, which was originally published in 1917. I will quote Otto as translated into English by John W. Harvey.

> "The negative evaluation of the world in Hinduism means…that it can never aspire to be a fully ethical religion, for only by a positive evaluation of the world as it is evident in Christianity can the world become the sphere of service to the Divine Will. Only when the divine is recognized both as the valuable in itself and as the ground and source of all mundane values can the Holy be said to be properly apprehended. Consequently, the Indian tradition fails to properly value the Holy as a complex of the rational and nonrational elements."[346]

Otto's stance on Hinduism is evidently grounded in the historical notion of imperialism and power struggles of the West over the East. *Imperialism* is the notion of one nation ruling over another. While Otto is an esteemed German Lutheran theologian who seems like a classic Hegelian, he did not have expertise in Hinduism. Even though Otto was an early inquirer of Eastern religious traditions, he dismisses the beliefs of Hinduism as he does not clearly understand these beliefs from a Hindu perspective. Thus, he constructs

knowledge of Hinduism based on imperialistic notions and is listened to by the West because he is a scholar with authority in the West.

From a de-Orientalized Eastern perspective, this is a clear example of how the Western world constructs knowledge of the Eastern world as always deviant from the Western norm. In turn, this affects the East because the beliefs of the West cause the East to question itself as Easterners. Because of this, Easterners are forced to think about how they understand themselves in both the Eastern and Western worlds. This is the key issue that is the foundation for postcolonial studies. Vanessa Andreotti points to this postcolonial challenge in education.

> "Postcolonial theory encourages a position of vigilance, hyper-self-reflexivity and critical dialogue with a view to enable negotiations of more equal relationships, more responsible practices and an ethical responsibility toward the Other, 'before will,' and beyond the confines of common languages, or universal communicative reason. Nevertheless, despite postcolonial theory's call for an ethical relationship with difference, it can reproduce assumptions of epistemic superiority if treated as just a form of rational self-critique and self-validation, and therefore, like any other theory, it should be treated with critical caution and care."[347]

Andreotti says that postcolonial theory that acknowledges the need for self-reflexivity and critical dialogue help to move toward "an ethical responsibility toward the Other". Andreotti does not phrase this as "for the other" but "toward the other". If one culture considers itself necessary to engage in dominant ideologies because these cultures have a responsibility "for the other", then this indicates that one culture is dominant and the other culture is submissive. For this reason, Andreotti uses the phrase "toward the other" to press her point that cultures have an ethical responsibility to responsibly negotiate boundaries for "more equal relationships, more responsible practices, and an ethical responsibility". The postcolonial challenge here is to treat each culture with

"critical caution and care" in a manner that does not place one culture in an "epistemic superiority" that practices dominance over submissive cultures. This is the postcolonial challenge that Otto misses in his abovementioned claim about Hinduism. Otto seems to portray Hinduism as an unethical religion that lies in the shadows of Christianity. This theological stance reinforces the unequal power relationship of the West that attempts to dominate the East in an attempt to "civilize" Easterners. While there is a vast body of literature on transcendence[348] in worship, I will specifically focus on the educational dilemmas that arise due to colonizing agendas.

I aim to specifically show in this chapter how Hinduism works in "the sphere of service to the Divine Will" despite Otto's claim. I particularly hope to relate how the divine is the ground source of Oneness according to Hinduism. I relate how the Indian tradition does not fail to value the Holy as a complex of rational and nonrational elements that are a part of a Oneness. I will point to how the theological dispute of Hindu metaphysics arises in the West as a way to define the Other based on Western expectations instead of the need to understand the Other from an Eastern perspective. My analysis embodies Andreotti's ethical claim as I relate how the West redefines Hinduism as a part of its dominant responsibility "toward the other" as opposed to "for the other." Moreover, I will show how several scholars of the humanities further the agendas of a hidden curriculum of the West "for the other". Specifically, these scholars gloss over Hinduism in a manner that misrepresents the complexities of Hindu metaphysics. In this chapter, I aim to reveal the hidden curriculum of the West that misrepresents Hindu metaphysics. As a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, I am

forced to confront this misrepresentation of Hindu metaphysics that is part of a Western hidden curriculum when I dance, because I feel I have a responsibility "toward the other". After the hidden curriculum is revealed, I consider it essential to focus on a de-Orientalized epistemological framework of Hindu metaphysics based primarily on Hindu scriptures.

According to curriculum theorists Gair and Mullins,

> "Just as the term *hidden agenda* conjures up something covert or undisclosed, *hidden curricula* suggests intentional acts to obscure or conceal – a conscious duplicity that may not always be present. However, the hidden curriculum is not something that we must look behind or around in order to detect; in most cases it is plainly in sight, and functions effortlessly."[349]

As scholars cite other scholars who misrepresent Hindu metaphysics, the hidden curriculum functions effortlessly. There is a hidden agenda present when scholars do not disclose the complexities of Hindu metaphysics according to Hinduism. The nature of Hindu metaphysics is concealed in a hidden curriculum that explains Hindu metaphysics according to Western expectations of what Hinduism should be. As I reveal the hidden curriculum of Hindu metaphysics as a part of my pedagogical process, I employ the primary Hindu scriptures to confront Orientalist interpretations.

The notion of a hidden curriculum is not a new phenomenon in education that solely focuses on Orientalism. Emile Durkheim[350] (1858-1917) observed that the hidden curriculum is an implicit ideology that aims to reinforce certain cultural behaviors. Philip Jackson,[351] an educational theorist, examines the term "hidden curriculum" in his seminal text *Life in Classrooms*.[352] For Jackson, the hidden curriculum focuses more on the institutional expectations of students, which are often linked to societal prospects, as

opposed to educational goals that pertain to teaching and learning through philosophical methods. Ivan Illich reveals the hidden curriculum in *Deschooling Society*.[353] Robert Dreeben[354] indicates that the hidden curriculum causes students to form social relationships that ignore their personal identity as they accept categorical treatment. In other words, students become what the hidden curriculum suggests they should be. This is crucial to consider because Hindus will become what the West wants Hindus to be if the hidden curriculum is ignored.

To build on Dreeban's notion of the hidden curriculum, I turn to Elizabeth Vallance's outline of it.

> "(1) Hidden curriculum can refer to any of the contexts of schooling, including the student-teacher interaction unit, classroom structure, the whole organizational pattern of the educational establishment as a microcosm of the social value system. (2) Hidden curriculum can bear on a number of processes operating in or through schools, including values acquisition, socialization, maintenance of class structure. (3) Hidden curriculum can embrace the degrees of intentionality and depth of hidden-ness as perceived by the investigator, ranging from incidental and quite unintended by-products of curricular arrangements to outcomes more deeply embedded in the historical social function of education."[355]

According to Vallance, the hidden curriculum refers to contexts of schooling that aim to propagate a particular social value system by the maintenance of the social structure. The hidden curriculum is evident when teaching and learning becomes a discipline system that imposes certain ideologies on students. Based on the hidden curriculum, education functions to maintain a particular class structure that prevents upward mobility among students.

It is important to mention that the laws that the British developed, in India, politically changed the social system of Hindu dancers who practiced a sacred Hindu

ethic of dance in a manner that prevented upward social mobility.[356] This created a hidden curriculum of Hindu dance, which moved from religious to political in the eyes of many. Essentially, the British hoped to employ a hidden curriculum to transform Indian culture to meet British expectations. This was not the case only in India. Vallance relates how the hidden curriculum developed in American education in a manner that influenced American culture:

> "Insofar as it embodied the intent of these educator-statesmen, the pattern of American schooling prior to the 1830s was designed to serve two purposes. First, it was intended to transmit the traditional culture. But the need to perform such a function had become apparent only in the light of unsettling changes in the social structure; family and church were no longer carrying their old share of the educational burden. The pattern of schooling that had been urged as a remedy to this breakdown of the socialization process represented an adaptive, but also a conservative, response. Second, the pattern of schooling had come to serve as a means of creating a specifically national and uniform culture. Schools as agencies of social reform were to inculcate the standards of a public morality and to reinforce the legitimacy of established authority."[357]

Vallance points to the colonizing agenda within the hidden curriculum. Schools, prior to the 1830s, transmitted a "traditional culture" that was meant to civilize students despite the changes within the traditional family and church life. Schools in the United States in the 1830s were a place for upper and middle class white children to learn to behave as "traditional" white children should based on their place in an already socially constructed class system. Similarly in India, the British enforced an educational system that taught Indians what the British felt Indians needed to know to serve British society.[358]

Bowles and Gintis[359] agree that schools are not a meritocratic place for upward mobility but rather are a place that reproduces the class structure as students learn to

make occupational choices based on what they are told that they are capable of doing. This is precisely what Jane Martin[360] refers to as she views the hidden curriculum as an authoritative agenda of teachers who use language and the curriculum to ensure that students remain in a particular social structure that prevents upward mobility. Martin offers a proposed solution to confront the agendas of the hidden curriculum.

> "When we find a hidden curriculum, we can show it to those destined to be its recipients. Consciousness raising, if you will, with a view to counteracting the hidden curricula of settings are not now in a position to change or abolish. Not that consciousness raising is any guarantee that a person will not succumb to a hidden curriculum. But still, one is in a better position to resist if one knows what is going on. Resistance to what one does not know is difficult, if not impossible."[361]

Even though there is no guarantee that the social structure will change, Martin proposes that educators open their eyes to maintain an awareness of the hidden curriculum and reveal the hidden curriculum to students. Once educators acknowledge that there is a hidden curriculum, in whichever context, educators need to attempt to counteract the agendas. This will help students to become aware of the hidden curriculum in a manner that may cause them to resist the urge to succumb to the concealed agendas. With this need to unveil the hidden curriculum in mind, I maintain awareness of the hidden curriculum throughout my pedagogical processes in the spaces in which I teach.

While the notion of the hidden curriculum is not new in education, I consider it necessary to stress the relevance of the hidden curriculum to postcolonial studies. Gauri Viswanathan points to the hidden curriculum that postcolonial scholars need to acknowledge during teaching and learning. Specifically, Viswanathan focuses on the hidden curriculum that arose during British rule in India.

> "In the absence of the direct interaction with the indigenous population that characterized earlier administrations, the colonial subject was reduced to a conceptual category, an object emptied of all personal identity to accommodate the knowledge already established and being circulated about the 'native Indian.' The strategies of British administrators, the reversals, the disavowals, the imagined successes, and the imagined failures are all part of an unstable foundation of knowledge, and the experiment in control that was born of it – the introduction of English education – was as much an effort, however feeble, at strengthening that foundation as an instrument of discipline and management."[362]

The British did not have a direct interaction with the Indians in an attempt to understand Indian culture. Instead, the British reduced the colonial subject to an empty vessel stripped of long held religious and cultural traditions. The British developed the "British Indian curriculum"[363] to teach Indians about an imagined India based on how the British understood India. Indians were taught to understand themselves based on British expectations. This is essentially the hidden curriculum of the British who taught the history of an imagined India to Indians and claimed imagined success. Because of the presence of a hidden curriculum, I confront the history of an imagined India as I engage in a de-Orientalized pedagogical process.

The hidden curriculum aims to Orientalize the Other to adhere to a fictionalized ideal of what the Other ought to be, based on colonizing expectations. Knowledge becomes the transference of knowledge from the colonizer to the subject, who is expected to simply be what the individual ought to be as a compliant Other. The educators of the hidden curriculum employ an *imperial gaze* to civilize students. Hindu metaphysics becomes a fictionalized account in the West based on what the West expects Hinduism to be. For this reason, I aim to de-Orientalize Hindu metaphysics based on Hinduism as opposed to Western expectations. Hindu metaphysics impacts on my phenomenology as

a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer who aims to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism based on a non-fictionalized account of Hinduism.

As a postcolonial woman, I struggle with revering Hindu traditions while also recognizing the need for hybridity as described by Homi Bhabha.[364] I do not aim to misrepresent Hinduism and merely conform to Western expectations of who I am as a Hindu woman. Rather, I am to revere Hinduism while I confront contradictions, misunderstandings, and paradoxes with the goal of coming to an understanding of who I am as a Hindu who is a part of a Western society. Here, it is crucial to acknowledge that while I reject Western, Orientalized depictions of Hinduism, I also acknowledge Hinduism as an un-static religion that rests on hybrid identities which develop as the world that we live in transforms. My goal is not to determine what constitutes an "accurate" or "inaccurate" interpretation of Hinduism. Rather what I am saying is that my struggle is to come to terms with how I should represent Hinduism in a de-Orientalized manner based on hybrid identities in hybrid spaces.

Aside from Hindu metaphysics, I consider it necessary to point out that scholars who endorse the hidden curriculum reinforce the misunderstanding of females in Hinduism. For instance, several Western civilization course textbooks,[365] such as *The Humanistic Experience* by Gloria K. Fiero,[366] have pictures of naked Hindu Goddesses with large, firmly rounded breasts with nipples and curved bodies. I face great discomfort when I encounter these art pieces because they misrepresent the deities of Hinduism. Moreover, these art pieces provoke a *Western male gaze* that exoticizes sacred female entities of Hinduism, which in turn furthers Orientalism. Scholars who use

these art pieces need to acknowledge that Hindu mandirs (places of worship) clothe murtis (seemingly idol-like statues) with garments and jewels. Traditionally, Hindus clothe murtis as a part of puja (worship). Here there is a disconnection between what the Western course textbooks portray and my actuality as a Hindu woman.

At the same time, it is important to consider that Hindu deities are beyond clothing made for humans. The *Vastu and Silpa Sastra*[367] relates the nature of Hindu arts, crafts, and architecture. While the text discusses the precise measurements for sculptures, it does not endorse eroticism. I maintain that if the human eye could view a naked body without erotic arousal but instead view the unclothed body with a sacred gaze, then the body would not be erotic but rather would be sacred. Thus, it is not the naked body that is the issue but rather the imposed gaze is the problem.

Yet, traditional Indian culture would not endorse scanty clothing for Indian females, whether Hindu or non-Hindu. Saaris, clothing for women, are often six yards in length and are wrapped around the full length of the body. Yet, scholars who do not know Hinduism but rather study Hinduism from a constructed imagined Western perspective develop a framework of Hinduism that does not align with the actualities of Hindus or Indian culture. In sum, the hidden curriculum here reinforces the metaphor of the colonizer as a dominant masculinity who aims to colonize the submissive female to succumb to Western expectations.

*Overlapping Pedagogical Space in the Classroom*

In higher education, several required and non-required courses in religious studies, cultural studies, history and so forth aim to teach students about Hinduism and

Indian culture. These courses may continue to further Orientalist agendas or may provide a de-Orientalized space for critical thought. I will specifically focus my attention on Religious Studies courses since I am invited to present and dance the most in these courses. Many professors use *The Anatomy of the Sacred*[368] by James C. Livingston as a standard introductory text to *Introduction to Religious Studies* courses. In the text, Livingston writes about Hinduism without postcolonialism in mind. This creates an opportunity for Orientalist agendas to thrive and a misrepresentation of Hinduism and Indian culture to occur.

Livingston begins the text with a statement in the first chapter listing several definitions of religion.

> "Each of these definitions or descriptions of religion is informative, and each has been influential. However, not one of them may strike us as fully adequate. Obviously, they are not all compatible; some appear to be too limited in terms of what we know about the variety of historical expressions of religion. Certainly, the philosopher James Martineau would limit religion to ***monotheism*** and thus would exclude the ***polytheism*** of much Greek and Roman religion, and popular Hinduism, as well as Theraveda Buddhism and Confucianism, which are nontheistic. This is hardly an adequate definition."[369]

Livingston's overall point is that the historical definitions of religion that range from James Martineau to Karl Marx are inadequate. For this reason, Livingston points out that the views of James Martineau, who would limit religion to exclude polytheism, provide an inadequate definition of religion. I appreciate Livingston's acknowledgement of the unique components that make up each religion. He seems to work in a pedagogical space here that aims to understand the uniqueness of each religion without evangelizing one religion to conform to the other. However, my concern is that Livingston glosses over "popular" Hinduism as polytheistic. There was no reference to the controversies that

surround Hinduism as a monotheistic or a polytheistic religion. In a sense, Livingston loosely reinforces the notion of Hinduism as a polytheistic religion without any critical thought about Hinduism based on Hindu scriptures. This theological stance reinforces the hidden curriculum of the West that aims to cast Hinduism as a polytheistic religion that is inadequate in the shadows of Christianity.

Students may, in turn, view Hinduism as a polytheistic religion without any discussion of the controversies surrounding this claim. While I do not demand that students view Hinduism as monotheistic, I do aim to help students make an informed claim about Hinduism after an introduction to Hinduism based on Hindu scriptures. I am not saying that *Introduction to Religious Studies* courses should use scriptures from individual religions to introduce them. What I am saying is that the authors of the religious studies texts along with the educators who use the texts should research the claims about the world religions using the respective religion's scriptures as a primary source of information. After presenting the claims, educators should facilitate a philosophical discussion to promote critical thought about the world religions.

I aimed to promote critical thought through philosophical discussions when I visited two sections of *Introduction to Religious Studies* at Fairfield University in April 2012.[370] The course text for both sections was Livingston's book.[371] As I prepared to visit the classes at Fairfield, I read parts of the course text that discussed Hinduism. I focused on certain parts of the text as I presented Livingston's claim, shared Hindu scriptures, and then provided a space for the class and I to engage in a dialogue. Particularly, I started by referring to Livingston's abovementioned statement about the

inadequacies of the proposed definitions of religion. I specifically pointed to the way Livingston mentioned Hinduism as a polytheistic religion. Then, I used Hindu sources to explain Hinduism as a monotheistic religion where many Gods and Goddesses emerge from One Supreme Being. The class and I engaged in a philosophical discussion about monotheism, polytheism, and monism.

While most of the class agreed that Hinduism is a monotheistic religion because many Gods and Goddesses emerge from One Supreme Being, there were a few students who disagreed because there are many forms of Gods and Goddesses in Hinduism. At that point, my role as the teacher was not to evangelize the students to share my belief of Hinduism as monotheistic, but rather to collaboratively discuss Hinduism as monotheistic, polytheistic, or monistic. The class was not combative but instead respectfully engaged in a discussion. As an educator and faith-based Hindu, I am often in this precarious position. On the one hand, I need to serve as a facilitator in the classroom who politely guides students to participate in a philosophical, non-evangelizing, de-Orientalized discussion about Hinduism. However, on the other hand, I need to confront misinterpretations of Hinduism that further the notion of the East as an inferior entity that needs to meet Western expectations.

In the pedagogical space of the classroom, I need to remain open-minded but I am also placed in a position as the educator who is seen, in many cases, as the “expert” who “corrects” errors. I participate in the philosophical discussions in an attempt to show that I respect the thoughts of the participants as I struggle with this precarious position. Because I aim to provoke de-Orientalized representations of Hinduism, I ask questions to

the participants in an attempt to understand how they arrive at their conclusions. In turn, I respectfully aim to share how I develop my philosophical conclusions about Hinduism. More questions usually develop as the participants and I move deeper in the discussion in an attempt to move towards answers to philosophical questions about Hinduism. This helps me to become a part of the discussion as opposed to the "expert" who solely aims to "correct" mistakes.

Based on the discussion during the class session, I developed a view of Hinduism as monistic based on my experience as I participated in a *studenting* role while maintaining a position as an educator during the discussion. This helped me to improve my pedagogy as I aim to use dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. Most importantly though, I felt I needed to present Hinduism based on Hindu scriptures and then point to possible misinterpretations and surrounding controversies. This was a part of my de-Orientalized pedagogy as an educator.

There is need to recognize the tension between authority and the ability of students to develop their own perspective. The literature in poststructural feminism addresses this concern. Specifically, Elizabeth Ellsworth[372] focuses on how educators use a hidden curriculum to control how students interpret popular cultural forms. Educators must understand that the way students construct knowledge is never divorced from their own identity that influences their subjectivity. Yet, some educators seek to motivate students to develop a particular kind of attitude as knowledge develops. These educators view themselves as experts who maintain an overriding ideological position that controls knowledge construction. The hidden curriculum here is based on

assumptions that influence particular meanings for students grounded on what educators view as proper meaning making.

I consider it necessary to point out that some individuals may believe I have a hidden curriculum as a faith-based Hindu who uses Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to educate. My pedagogical processes help me to share my identity as a faith-based Hindu dancer through education that focuses on de-Orientalization. Orientalists created an imagined history of Hinduism and Indian culture, which caused misrepresentations of Hinduism to develop. As I engage in de-Orientalism, I share the history of Hinduism and Indian culture in a manner that resonates with the actuality of my identity as a faith-based Hindu. Even if individuals do not believe in Hinduism as literal history, the historicity of the Hindu traditions and scriptures are in and of themselves historical. Thus, I share a representation of Hinduism and Indian culture that is not based on a re-created, imagined history that developed from the observations of Western scholars who were unfamiliar with Hinduism and Indian culture. My metaphysical comprehension develops within the Hindu tradition. This does not mean that I provide the most authentic version of Hinduism. Bhabha would concur that traditions are always in a constant state of flux. Essentially, my goal is to provide a counter-narrative to disrupt an Orientalist, hidden curriculum that has the potential to colonize.

My de-Orientalized pedagogy does not aim to control passive students who receive and believe what I do about Hinduism and Indian culture. On the contrary, my

de-Orientalized pedagogy acknowledges the ability of students to critically think about a representation of Hinduism and Indian culture. Ellsworth writes,

> "Viewers are not passive recipients of an already meaningful message. Depending on their social, political, economic, racial, and gender positions within a culture, viewers are likely to attach a wide range of interpretations."[373]

Likewise, I do not believe I teach passive viewers who must view Hinduism as a meaningful religion. I acknowledge that the position of the viewers develops based on several maintained positions. Viewers will construct meaning based on their own identity just as I make sense of knowledge because of who I am. This becomes a mutually beneficial position where viewers who bring their own meaning of a de-Orientalized representation of Hinduism may engage with me in a space of hybridity to negotiate interpretations.

Overall, it seems that when Western scholars such as Gloria Fiero,[374] Lawrence Cunningham and John Reich,[375] and Margaret King[376] to name a few studied Asian religions, they unintentionally misinterpreted some aspects of Hinduism as I feel Livingston did in the abovementioned quote. To the observer's eye, Hinduism does have a variety of Gods and Goddesses, which on the surface seems to fit the definition of polytheism, but these Gods and Goddesses stem from One Supreme Being. Thus, underneath the surface from a critical observer's perspective, Hinduism is a monotheistic religion. In fact, some non-Christians may argue that Christianity is polytheistic because of the belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At any rate, I understand why some view Hinduism as a polytheistic religion. Regardless, it is crucial to stress that Hindu scriptures indicate that Hinduism is a monistic religion. My main concern here is that

Western scholars who unintentionally misinterpret Hinduism write down their misinterpretations, which are then cited by other scholars. Thus, the hole of misinterpretation gets deeper and deeper as Orientalism thrives. To correct this, it is imperative to go back to the Hindu scriptures themselves when citing claims about Hinduism without reading through a Western religious lens. I do not mean to say that there is one correct interpretation, but rather here I aim to point to Orientalist interpretations that do not maintain a *sacred gaze* coupled with a *de-Orientalized educational gaze*.

Here I struggle with a tension that arises for me as an educator and faith-based Hindu. While I wish to remain open-minded as I attempt to make sense of interpretations of Hinduism, I am put in the position of an "expert" who some expect to "correct" scholarly errors that further Orientalism. It is not about being an "expert" who "corrects" wrong interpretations. Rather, it is about unveiling a masculine, colonial curriculum that misrepresents Hinduism as an inferior, submissive religion that must conform to Westernized, imagined versions of what Hinduism should be.

This theological debate is attached to colonialist practices that aim to redefine Hinduism to meet Western expectations of what Hinduism is. Western scholars do not seem concerned about Hinduism from a Hindu perspective, but rather seem more concerned with maintaining an imagined version of Hinduism that stems from colonial practices embedded into a hidden curriculum. In this hidden curriculum, Hinduism is a part of an Eastern religion that is a polytheistic Other of a monotheistic Western Christianity. The hidden curriculum, especially in many Western civilizations college

course textbooks[377], aims to maintain a particular Western view of an imagined Hinduism. I do not claim that all Western civilizations textbooks and religious studies textbooks Orientalize Hinduism. However, it does seem that several literary sources do further a hidden curriculum that aims to maintain colonial views of an imagined version of Hinduism.

As I confront the Orientalism present in literary sources when I present and dance in the overlapping pedagogical space of the classroom, I engage in a particular pedagogical process. My pedagogical process, which develops through my self-study, is not a recipe for my pedagogy but rather guides me in the spaces in which I teach. I do not follow this pedagogical process step by step but instead I often intertwine each element as I pay close attention to the presence of a hidden curriculum. First, I read the readings that the professor assigns to the class. Thus, there is a need for me to communicate with the professor as I familiarize myself with the syllabus and reading requirements for the course. This step is important because it leads to the following step. As a part of the next step, I confront Orientalism in literary sources to unmask a hidden curriculum as I specifically read the readings to determine if the author engages in Orientalism. If I determine that there is a presence of Orientalism in the text, then I use the primary Hindu scriptures to correct the misrepresentations as I plan my de-Orientalized teaching presentation. Aside from preparing for the teaching presentation by familiarizing myself with the readings, I usually de-brief with the professor, either through email, video chat, or in person, to determine the class demographics. Through an analysis of my self-study data, I realize that I often discuss the following questions with

professors before I visit their classes: How many students are in the class? How do they feel about the concepts of Eastern religion? What kind of classroom climate is present in the classroom? How are they doing overall academically? How could I possibly contribute to the classroom dynamic? Based on all of the elements, including the reading, I select an appropriate Hindu dance. The dance is not entertainment but rather is meant to supplement my pedagogy that aims to teach about Hinduism and confront the postcolonial reality of Hinduism through dance.

*Pedagogical Space of Hybridity at an Invited Lecture*

As I teach non-Hindus during invited lectures, I present Hinduism as a monotheistic, legitimate faith-based religion. I serve as an educator in an overlapping pedagogical space where I am confronted with my Eastern and Western identities, but mostly feel that I am an educator in a pedagogical space of hybridity. I acknowledge that cultures are not static, which means that Eastern and Western cultures change to adapt to our current time. Simultaneously though, I feel the need to remain in fidelity to my faith-based Hindu rituals while also adapting to my Western identity. My goal is to provide a new form of understanding that helps me to move beyond the West and East binary as I educate non-Hindus in the West. I use creativity with sensitivity as I learn to engage in teaching and learning in a pedagogical space of hybridity. This is different from the overlapping pedagogical space of the classroom. In the pedagogical space of hybridity, I engage in distinct contemplative practices that frame who I am as a Hindu dancer, as opposed to the classroom where there is a stronger emphasis on the facilitation of discussions.[378]

In the space of hybridity, I do not just aim to teach, but I also hope to share my contemplative practices as a faith-based Hindu dancer in a manner that does not evangelize. This is the space where there is a strong emphasis on the cultures of non-Hindus and Hindus as a part of a cultural mixture that needs to remain sensitive to each other as cultures remain hybrid. However, this space of cultural mixture is filled with a tension between traditions and the need to share those traditions in a de-Orientalized manner. This space is contaminated with the legacy of colonial history that influences the prior knowledge of non-Hindus as well as the gender inequalities of who I am as a female. There is a need for a re-contextualization of traditions in this space that aims to move beyond the recognition of the impurity of colonialism, especially in a hidden curriculum, and towards Andreotti's notion of responsibility "toward the other."

When I was invited by Karen Pechilis, chair of the Comparative Religion Department, to deliver a campus-wide lecture and dance at Drew University in October 2012[379], I began the lecture by relating Hinduism as a monistic religion. I explained that from the One Supreme Being, many Gods and Goddesses emerge. The focus of the presentation was on the incarnation of Shri Rama in the age of Treta Yug. Shri Rama emerges from the One Supreme Being as a form of God on Earth. Several of the students read excerpts from the *Ramayana* in their classes at Drew. Thus, I was invited to present on the *Ramayana* from a Hindu perspective. Essentially, many may dismiss the *Ramayana* as mere fantasy without acknowledging the historical aspect of the epic. The historical *Ramayana* has several fantasy-like characters such as Shri Hanuman the apeman, Jambavant the bear, and so forth. How could this epic be a part of Hindu history

and not fantasy when there are several fantasy-like characters? From a Hindu and scientific perspective, I explained the logical possibility of the *Ramayana* as history and not mere fantasy.[380] I will elaborate on this in the following chapter that discusses Orientalist notions of Hinduism as mythology and de-Orientalized notions of Hinduism as history. My point here is that I explained how Shri Rama is an incarnation of the One Supreme Being on Earth and also related how the *Ramayana* is indeed a part of Hindu history. My goal was to clarify why Hinduism is monistic and also present the *Ramayana* as a part of Hindu history.

I felt a positive energy fill the presentation space as I perceived an educational, sacred gaze from the viewers. I did not feel the looming presence of an exotic gaze, but rather I felt that the viewers viewed me as a sacred dancer. There was a stillness in the space as I presented to viewers who were seated on theatre style chairs and also cross-legged on the floor. The viewers had a look on their faces that caused me to feel that they were interested in understanding my presentation. I sensed that the viewers understood my presentation of Hinduism as monistic and the great Hindu epics as a part of Hindu history. Regardless of whether the viewers viewed the *Ramayana* as fantasy or history, I sensed that they appreciated the faith of Hindus. As the thirty minute *Ram Kahani* chant played in the lecture hall as individuals entered and exited the lecture space, I sensed that there was an aura of calmness in the lecture space that seemed to fill the entire space. I felt that I was able to teach non-Hindus about Hinduism without evangelizing non-Hindus but while also remaining in fidelity to my own faith as a Hindu. No one questioned the monistic nature of Hinduism during the question and answer portion of the

lecture. I sensed that the viewers understood my lecture because my faith in Hinduism linked my theory to my practice as a Hindu dancer. I sense that anyone who may have disagreed with me about the monotheistic nature of Hinduism had an open mind to think about my faith in Hinduism as a monotheistic religion. I did not sense any combativeness or intimidation from the viewers.

Since I presented on an excerpt from the *Ramayana*[381], I created a sacred space with my Shri Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman murti (statue-like representation of a manifestation of a Supreme Being). I also included my sacred *Ramayana* in the sacred space so that the viewers could see that the epic is indeed hundreds of pages long. Many do not realize this since water-downed shortened versions are often used for courses in higher education.

This is a sacred space that I created in the lecture hall at Drew University to remind the viewers of my contemplative practices as a Hindu dancer.

I engage in a specific pedagogical process in the space of hybridity when I am invited to present and dance at campus-wide lectures. This process is more meticulous compared to when I am requested to present in classrooms. Often, my pedagogical processes intertwine because I frequently am invited to campuses to teach in classrooms

and also to present for an invited campus-wide lecture. Thus, these processes are not meant to serve as a stringent outline but instead direct me in the spaces in which I teach.

First, there is a need to secure an appropriate venue with multi-media capacity for the campus-wide lecture. Although an auditorium setting might seem appropriate, I am not comfortable using a stage for an invited campus-wide lecture. This is because the physical characteristics of the stage provoke a pedagogical space of mirroring as opposed to a pedagogical space of hybridity, which I aim to teach in during campus-wide lectures. It is my desire that the venue have a seating style that allows me to interact with the viewers. As a faith-based Hindu who contemplatively practices the ethic of Hindu dance, I construct a sacred space in the venue on the day of the campus-wide lecture. Therefore, I require a small table, which I cover with a shimmering piece of sacred cloth. In the sacred space, I often place a murti (statue), fresh flowers, and other religious items that would supplement my presentation and dance.

After a venue is secured, my colleagues and I develop a flyer to advertise the campus-wide lecture to the campus community and the public at large. I proofread the flyer carefully to ensure that the wording does not Orientalize me or endorse a hidden curriculum. For instance, some colleagues may refer to me as a liturgical dancer or a Pan-Asian dancer in the flyer. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, these terms do not resonate with who I am as a Hindu dancer.

Then, as I plan the presentation, I seek to determine the prior knowledge that the viewers may have about Hinduism. Since the campus-wide lectures are frequently open to the campus community and the public, it is difficult to determine what the prior

knowledge of the viewers is. Despite this, I ask about what the students learnt in classes as it pertains to Hinduism and Indian culture. I engage in a discussion with my colleagues to determine why they feel I would be a good presenter for the campus. Based on the discussion, my presentation for the campus-wide lecture often emerges as I aim to address the needs of the campus.

I ask my colleagues to secure a space for me to engage in my contemplative dressing process, which is rather intense. It takes about two to three hours to engage in the contemplative dressing process with the traditional Kuchipudi costume. The costumes are very sacred to me and so I prefer not to be around a great deal of non-vegetarian products since it is traditional to honor the costumes. I do not need a Green Room or a fancy space to dress in. In many cases, I often spread a blanket on the floor. I then lay out all of my dance ornaments. I frequently sit cross-legged on the floor getting dressed as I listen to Krishna Das[382] chants. While this does not require a large space, I do need a quiet space where I will not have interruptions or distractions.

Since I need to travel with my dance costume, presentation materials, sacred space elements, and other miscellaneous items, I need my colleagues to help me gain familiarity with the campus to determine where I may unload my luggage. For this reason, I need to obtain the campus map and parking information. I also have to coordinate with my colleagues because I often require assistance with unloading my luggage, which is often very heavy. Because I need to replenish ornaments for my professional attire and pay for traveling expenses, I desire a stipend or reimbursement when I present at campus-wide lectures. It is very difficult to travel to and from a

campus on the evening of an invited campus-wide lecture, unless the campus is in close proximity to me. Just as there is an extraordinary contemplative dressing process, there is also an intense contemplative un-dressing process. For this reason, I frequently require an overnight stay in a campus guest apartment or lodging near the campus.

*Theatrical Space of Mirroring*

Before I begin to dance in a theatrical event, I engage in de-Orientalized pedagogy that relates Hinduism as a monotheistic religion to the viewers of the dance. I introduce the event using a recorded visual clip that allows me to teach without disrupting my need to remain contemplative in a theatrical space before the event. For instance, during *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance*[383], I stated in an introductory visual clip,

> "Overall, my goal is to use Kuchipudi Indian Classical Hindu dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism with postcolonial realities in mind. Despite what the misinformed Orientalists who misportray Hinduism say, Hinduism is a monist religion that believes from One Supreme Being, many forms of God emerge. Thus, there is One ultimate God, but this One God manifests in different forms, at different times, for different purposes."[384]

As I introduced myself to the viewers, I stated my goal as a postcolonial educator. I related Hinduism as a monistic religion in which many forms of God emerge from One Supreme Being. My hope here is that the viewers will understand that the numerous Gods and Goddesses in Hinduism emerge from One Supreme Being at different times for different purposes. While I did not quote Hindu scriptures or give any particular references, I hope that my phenomenological experience will radiate to the viewers in a manner that causes the viewers to understand who I am as a monotheistic Hindu.

I engaged in de-Orientalized pedagogy using visual clips before each dance as I continued with the recital. To begin, I danced a traditional *Pushpanjali* followed by a

*Devi Stuti*. I offered flowers to the puja (sacred) space on the stage and then afterwards asked One Supreme Being to manifest as the Mata (Mother) Durga, Mata Lakshmi, and Mata Sarasvati. I felt a feminine Motherly, Goddess presence around me in a manner that protected me as the dancer and guarded the performance. Here, I stress my point that the female entities of Hinduism are not naked with large round breasts as portrayed by the earlier mentioned Western civilizations texts. On the contrary, the female entities that I sense radiate with jewels and colorful clothing in a manner that blinds me from the audience. All I see and sense is the presence of these divine entities as I dance for, with, and because of their divine blessings.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, each Hindu dance recital traditionally begins with a puja (religious worship) on stage before the curtains open. I pray for One Supreme Being to manifest in different forms to protect me as the dancer and guard the performance. During the *Devi Stuti*, I felt as if my inner spiritual eye saw the Goddess Durga, Goddess Lakshmi, and Goddess Sarasvati as tall as the height of the entire stage. It was as if the Goddesses, dressed in colorful saaris and golden sparkling jewels, were on the stage with me since I prayed for them to manifest to protect me and guard the performance. I felt calmness in my body as I danced in a safe space where man-made time did not seem to exist in that moment.

In this pedagogical space of mirroring, I do not focus directly on teaching but rather I am immersed in the present moment as I dance. Here, I teach through my phenomenological experiences, which I do not discuss verbally with the viewers. Instead, as I mentioned earlier, I build a de-Orientalized epistemological framework

through visual learning clips. Essentially in this pedagogical space of mirroring, I teach as I engage in faith-based Hindu practices in a manner that does not aim to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism, but rather hopes to share who I am as a faith-based Hindu dancer.

Mata Durga

Mata Lakshmi

Mata Sarasvati

These images are with courtesy from Gyaan Ka Saagar, a Hindu mandir (place of worship) located in Rahway, NJ.

In one of the concluding video clips, I explained the purpose of the *Mangalam* dance in which the many forms of the Supreme Being merge back to One.

> "For the Mangalam dance, I will dance an excerpt from *Jai Shiva Omkara*, which is a traditional Hindu hymn written by the great Swami Shivananda. Earlier, I as the dancer, asked One God to manifest in different forms to protect me as the dancer and guard the performance. As I dance *Jai Shiva Omakara*, I ask the many Gods who have emerged to protect me as the dancer and guard the performance to return back as part of the One Supreme Being. The hymn *Jai Shiva Omkara* honors the One-ness of God. Although God manifests in different forms, at different times, for different purposes, the many forms that emerge are part of One divine being."[385]

The *Mangalam* dance is a traditional part of a Hindu dance recital. I chose to dance an excerpt from *Jai Shiva Omkara*[386] for the *Mangalam* dance. The verses of the hymn, traditionally known as an Aarti bhajan that is sung at the end of Hindu services, refer to the Oneness of the Supreme Being. The lyrics indicate that Bramhaji, Vishnuji, and

Shivaji, known as the Hindu Trinity, are a part of One body called Aum. Just as I, as the dancer, asked One Supreme Being to manifest in different forms to protect me as the dancer and guard the performance, I also asked the many different forms to return back to One.

While I shared my own faith-based Hindu perspective, I do not feel that I evangelized the viewers in any way. After each visual clip, I posed questions to the viewers. I am aware that the viewers did not have an opportunity to respond to the questions. Nevertheless, my goal was to use the questions as a philosophical stimulus for internal thought. These questions are not meant to produce a specific, correct answer. I aim to help individuals make sense of their own epistemological frameworks of how we come to know what we know, especially regarding each individual's purpose in the world. I also aim to make sense of my own epistemological framework of how I come to believe what I believe, especially as it pertains to what my purpose as a human is in this world. Returning to the *Mangalam*, I asked the viewers of the *Mangalam* dance to think about the following.

> "As you view the Mangalam, I ask you to think about the contemplative concept of the One and the Many.
>
> - Do you believe that there is One entity of the universe? If so, then who or what is the One?
> - Do you believe that there are Many aspects of the universe? If so, then who are what are the Many?
> - In Hinduism, many emerge from One and then many also emerge back to One. What would you say this emerging from and merging to means when we think of the concept of the One and the Many?"[387]

Throughout the entire event, I felt a sense of a God as One, even though I sensed a presence of a variety of Gods and Goddesses who emerged from One Supreme Being.

This feels as if my life becomes united with a heavenly divinity that manifests itself clearly for me. My body feels relaxed as every pore of my body receives a direct blessing from a Supreme Being. This feels as if a stream of cool, calming water flows through my body. I feel overwhelmed with joy in this moment as I dance because my phenomenological experience, which is real for me, seems unreal in the ordinary. I sometimes feel an aroma-fused bubble-like presence around me with several manifestations of One Supreme Being around me as a source of protection for me as I dance. During the dances, I would often engage in Hindu chants in prayer to the One Supreme Being though I chanted a variety of names. During the *Devi Stuti*, I often said the sacred names, Mata Durga, Mata Latchmi, and Mata Sarasvati.[388] As I danced *Tillana*, I sensed the presence of Shri Krishna. The *Tarangam* dance was dedicated to Shri Krishna but yet I chanted Om Namah Shivaya during the meditation portion of the dance. The *Mangalam* dance provided me with a deep religious experience beyond the description of words, especially since my brother, a Hindu pandit,[389] pre-recorded the song for me to dance. Since I was a young girl, my brother and I would sing this hymn in prayer together. I felt a deep sense of ancestry linked to my current family history as I heard my brother's voice sing this hymn. It was as if all my ancestors, my family, and I prayed in that moment for the blessings of the Supreme Being. My entire being was filled with a divine presence that aimed to worship One Supreme Being on behalf of my ancestors, family, friends, and people of the world.

My phenomenological experience was a religious experience for me that caused me to connect to the One Supreme Being of Hinduism as well as my many ancestors. I

also felt connected to my living family. My brother told me that the event was like attending a satsang (peaceful religious gathering). Overall, I felt that I successfully used Kuchipudi dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism as monistic and also engage in my own faith-based religious practices. I sensed that the viewers felt my phenomenology radiate as they may have experienced Hinduism as monistic. I do not claim to know what the viewers thought or felt. What am I saying is that I sensed that the viewers understood who I am as a monistic Hindu dancer. Several individuals approached me after the event to tell me that they learned a great deal about Hinduism. I had a profound phenomenological feeling because I felt in those moments after the event that I remained in fidelity to my own religious traditions as a Hindu as I sensitively taught non-Hindus in the West.

My pedagogical process in the theatrical space of mirroring is very meticulous. First, there is a need to secure funding for the theatrical because I require a theatre, access to a dressing room in the theatre, stage crew, lighting crew, and sound crew. I also often have a camera crew record the entire event. I aim to give proceeds from the event to a campus-wide contemplative project to promote contemplative practices across higher education. For instance, campuses may decide to use the funds to start a meditation garden project for the campus community. Although I hope to receive a stipend to cover my expenses, my main goal is to provide a de-Orientalized educational experience for the campus community. Next, my colleagues and I develop advertisements, which I carefully proofread to ensure that I am not Orientalized. Furthermore, I pay close

attention to ensure that the advertisements do not support a hidden curriculum. We then determine how to proceed with ticket sales.

I plan the visual teaching clips to introduce myself before I dance. Usually, I like to record these teaching clips outdoors in contemplative locations on the campus of the theatrical. However, this often requires a great deal of attention to weather and traffic on campus. My dedicated friends frequently help me to carry my materials and recording equipment as they help to film the visual teaching clips. I usually can only record the visual teaching clips on the weekend because that is when most campuses are not too busy. Regardless, the visual teaching clips often take hours to edit as a part of the teaching presentation. In fact, sometimes there is a need to re-record the visual teaching clips if the sound quality was poor or unexpected elements showed up in the background. Thus, the visual teaching clips require a great deal of time and effort. I enjoy recording the visual teaching clips because I feel it gives me the opportunity to become acquainted with the campus from a contemplative stance. In addition, I endure rigorous rehearsals, for the lack of a more appropriate word, as I prepare for a theatrical. The intensive dances require me to dedicate hours of time a week to “rehearse”. I have difficulty using the term “rehearse” because I am not focused on perfecting a technique, but rather I am immersed in a religious dance experience even when I “rehearse”.

On the day of the theatrical, I require a great deal of assistance from the campus community. I ask ushers to direct visitors from parking decks to the theatre. I seek responsible individuals to collect tickets, distribute brochures, and answer any logistical questions that the attendees may have. Simultaneously, I engage in a contemplative

dressing practice in the dressing room. Once I am fully dressed in the traditional Kuchipudi costume, I perform a Havan (religious worship) with a pandit[390] on the stage before the event officially begins. At that time, I pray for the One Supreme Being to protect me as I dance and bless me so that I fulfill my existential purpose as a faith-based Hindu dancer.

I consider it necessary to point out that I aim to rupture the hidden curriculum regardless of the pedagogical space in which I teach. In the pedagogical space of the classroom, I reject the Orientalized presentation of Hinduism as polytheistic, because this reinforces the East as an inferior that succumbs to Western expectations. In the pedagogical space of the lecture hall, I reject the *Western male gaze* that exoticizes the female body for erotic enjoyment. In the pedagogical theatrical space, I reject dance as mere acrobatics used solely for entertainment purposes. My phenomenological experience provides me with a sense of empowerment as a Hindu dancer, which allows me to stand firm as a Hindu despite seemingly intimidating Orientalists. I remain in control in each of these pedagogical spaces as I unveil the hidden curriculum. This control interrupts the traditional notion of the West as actively dominant and the East as passively submissive. Instead of being a passive, submissive female, I am the active faith-based Hindu who directs a sacred gaze, speaks back to Orientalists, and thus ruptures the unveiled hidden curriculum. While I negotiate control within the dialogic pedagogical spaces, I remain defensive as a faith-based Hindu who does not wish to reinforce the stereotypes of Hinduism that stem from Orientalism. In sum, I must remain guarded from Orientalism, which causes me to protect Hinduism as I remain in control as

a de-Orientalized educator. This is the concept of the shield that I mentioned in an earlier chapter. The shield is always at work for me when I feel the need to protect myself as a faith-based Hindu. Although I employ the concept of the shield when I dance, I also use the shield to protect me as a faith-based Hindu when the need arises. Power here is not used to proselytize but rather is constantly contested, appropriated, and redistributed.

*Monism through the Tarangam Dance*

With a Hindu metaphysical framework in mind, I now turn to share how I experience the monism of Hinduism specifically through the *Tarangam* dance. It is crucial for me to include this dance here because this dance focuses heavily on the mind and body connection. Although this connection might seem to be a dualist connection, my meditative experiences with this dance points to monism. The *Tarangam*, a Kuchipudi dance that portrays the mind and body as One, helps to frame my epistemological framework as a Hindu dancer. For this reason, I will share why the *Tarangam* dance causes me to believe in Hinduism as monistic. My goal here is to show how the *Tarangam* dance that I first performed at my *Rangapravesam*[391] influences my self-identity as a Hindu dancer who aims to attain moksha (liberation) upon death. As I dance the *Tarangam* dance, I aim to relate Hinduism as monistic. First, I relate the general method of the dance composition to provide a framework about the *Tarangam* dance. Second, I focus on my phenomenological experiences that occurred when I danced the *Tarangam* dance for the first time.

Here, it is important to first mention Narayana Theerta who was instrumental in the development of the *Tarangam* dance. Narayana Theerta, whose birth name was

Govinda Sastri, lived during the time period between 1580-1680 C.E.[392] Sastri studied under Guru Rama Govinda Theertas. During this time, Sastri decided to take the new name of Shiva Narayana Theerta. After studying the ancient texts of Hinduism, Narayana Theerta wrote the great *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini*[393] as a dance opera in the language of Sanskrit. According to Rao[394], "Srikrishna Leela Tarangini means 'waves of the wonderous deeds of Krishna.'" In this lyrical literary piece, the great manifestation of a Supreme Being, Shri Krishna, is described from his birth on earth to the time he leaves earth. Because of the depth of the piece, Rao indicates that the entire dance needs to be performed over a twelve-day time period since there are nearly 158 songs. *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini* was a part of the Bhakti Movement,[395] which is a movement that had a desire to promote the devotional life of Hindus of all castes and sects of Hinduism. Kuchipudi dancers became mesmerized once exposed to *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini*. Consequently, Kuchipudi Bhagavatalu in India infused Narayana Theerta's Shri Krishna Leela Tarangini into the Kuchipudi dance tradition.[396] Thus, Kuchipudi dancers give credit to Narayana Theerta for providing the lyrical dance opera to the Kuchipudi dance tradition.

In the famous *Neela Megha* dance, which is a composition in the *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini*, the dancer describes the beauty of Shri Krishna's mortal form and then goes on to ask the Supreme Being in the form of Shri Krishna to provide protection to the dancer. The *Tarangam* dance, a lengthy performance between thirty to forty-five minutes, begins with a sloka (Sanskrit Hindu prayer) as the dancer honors Shri Krishna through dance. As the dance continues, the dancer seeks to relate the ethical discourse of

the Shri Krishna leelas (actions of Krishna on earth) according to the ancient Hindu scriptures, which is the basis for the *Sri Krishna Leela Taringini*. After the dance drama, the dancer engages in a dance meditation as the dancer balances a lota filled with water on the head. A lota is similar to a small pot or a jug. Soon after the balancing of the lota of water on the head, the dancer begins to dance on the rims of a taari. A taari is similar to a plate.

> "The dancer stands on the sharp edge of a plate with a round bottomed pot full of water balanced on the head and executes a number of rhythmic patterns, without spilling the water. The artiste keeps correct timing and exhibits the traditional hand movements with intricate footwork in different gaits."[397]

The technique of the dancer is evident as the dancer dances to rhythmic patterns and intricate beats while simultaneously balancing the pot of water on the head and engaging in feet movement on the rims of the brass plate.

The dancer attempts to overcome duality by uniting the mind and body. First, there is a physical substance that is the body. Second, there is a mental, cognitive substance of the mind. Third, there is the noncognitive substance of the soul. In addition to the three substances, there are two places where the substances interact. First, is the physical realm and second is a realm of divinity. The physical realm is the realm of mortals who are bound to life in the physical world, whereas the realm of divinity is a place where the soul unites with a Supreme Being. Upon death, the dancer seeks to permanently unite with a Supreme Being. The dance is the dancer's way of attempting to reach this goal.

While we are alive, the physical substance of the body and the mental substance of the mind coordinate together. The physical substance of the body and the mental

substance of the mind do not exist upon death, but the soul does still exist according to Hinduism. The *Tarangam* dancer seeks to transfer the physical properties of the body then into mental properties into properties of the soul that survives the physical death of the human body. Furthermore, in this realm of divinity, the dancer is not bound to the mind and body but rather is bound to a cosmic entity. This is the monistic task that dancers of *Tarangam* need to move towards while maintaining control of the mind and body.

In this sense, the dance meditation that occurs is an art of immanence where the dancer's meditation occurs in the mind but is communicated through the mind's harmony with the soul and the body. Specifically, the *Tarangam* dance is an art of immanence because there is the permeation of a spiritual force that seeks to transcend the physical world. The dancer's dance is performed by the body as the nature of the mind and body is suspended and the mind unites with a Supreme Being. The body performs the dance not at the command of the mind but intuitively based on the trusted nature of the body to engage in the dance. If you grant me this claim, then we can agree that the mind usually tells the body what movements to make, but since the dance moves are intuitive, the mind is free to concentrate on the unity of the dancer's soul with the divine energy of a Supreme Being during the dance meditation.

Yogananda writes about the mind and body in a translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

> "The novice yogi, even after repeatedly experiencing peace during the practice of yoga, may yet be confronted by restless thoughts suddenly springing to the surface of consciousness from long-hidden subconscious sources. This invasion should not influence the yogi to abandon yoga through disbelief in its power to produce a lasting tranquility. He will find that the subconscious habits of restlessness will gradually cease to appear in a mind that becomes strongly

> fortified by the habit of meditation. O yogi! If by one or two divings into the ocean of divine perception you do not find the pearls of God-communion, do not blame the ocean as lacking in the Divine Presence! Rather find fault with your skill in diving!"[398]

Yogananda presents a way for dancers to think about the engagement of dance meditation just as a yogi thinks about traditional meditations. During the dance meditation, subconscious thoughts may enter the dancer's mind. However, this will disturb the dancer from engaging in the meditation because the thoughts may cause the pot of water to fall. The thoughts are distractions to the dancer who needs to intuitively trust the body. If the pot of water falls, the dancer should not find fault with the dance meditation, but rather should remain mindful of the purpose of the meditation in an attempt to overcome the fall and move towards unity with a Supreme Being. In an imminent dance meditation, the dancer's mind is solely focused on a Supreme Being. While perhaps this focus on a Supreme Being may be seen as a thought, it is not a thought of the material world that will distract the dancer from the meditation but rather is the sole thought that is the purpose of the meditation.

As the dancer continues to live life, the dancer seeks the monistic ideal of moksha (liberation). This is the point where upon death, the dancer will unite with a Supreme Being. Consequently, only the spirit will exist at the point of death. Nevertheless, the dancer needs to be able to manage the human life in this world that we live in. The dancer of *Tarangam* is connected to the brass plate, which is on the stage that is inside of a building that stands on the earth. The interconnected dancer co-exists as a spiritual being with the material elements of the earth. There is a link between the material objects of the brass plate and pot and the dancer's spirituality. In other words, the plate

and pot are physical symbols that have physical relationships to other physical things, but most importantly, the plate and pot serve as spiritual symbols of spiritual relationships.

Thus, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan describes the purpose of this *Tarangam* dance meditation.

> "Punkhano Punkha Vishayaan Upasevyamanaha
> Dheeronna Munchati Mukunda Padaravindam
> Sangeeta Vadya Laya Tala Vasangatapi
> Moulista Kumbha Parirakshana Dheernativa
> Like the dancer who concentrates on the waterpot while dancing to the music, accompanied by melodic instruments, the Brave One contemplates the divine feet of God. We are all bound to this earth (the brass plate under the feet) and we carry heavy responsibilities on our head (signified by the waterpot), but just as the dancer moves joyously in rhythm, her mind in glorious contemplation of God, so too should life be lived, with grace, energy and good purpose."[399]

According to the above, the dancer dances *Tarangam* as a meditation where the dancer concentrates on controlling the mind and body in a monistic manner. The plate symbolizes the individual's connection to the earth where we live and are a part of. Because we are a part of the earth, we need to bear the burden of responsibilities as we live life. However, we need to maintain a calm being as we make ethical choices that will help us to live a good life.

> "Some of the modernists, who believe in classicism look at this item as mere acrobats and do not understand the inner meaning of the feature. Indian dance and hence Kuchipudi is developed on devotion and concentration to ultimately realize the cosmic personality of God."[400]

Philosophers of mind, in particular, physicalists, may argue that there are no meditative phenomenological experiences in the *Tarangam* dance because subjective experience has no role in the dance. If the *Tarangam* dance was only physical, then the physicalists would be correct. The dance might be solely physical for some dancers who

perform *Tarangam*, but these dancers miss the point of the dance. A focus on solely the physical aspects of the dance prevents the *Tarangam* dancer from performing the dance in the fullest sense and having the religious experience, which is the intention of the dance that is represented through the physical act of the dance. Therefore, the *Tarangam* dance is not simply just a dance of technique. Even though dance technique is certainly present, there is a deeper meaning to the dance for the dancer, which the viewers may also acknowledge through a *sacred gaze*. This inner meaning deals with sincere devotion to a divine, Supreme Being as the dancer's concentration allows the dancer, despite the fact that the dancer is a mere mortal, to experience a divine connection to the Supreme Being through a meditative phenomenological experience.

At my *Rangapravesam*[401], I danced *Tarangam* for the first time. The dance was the *Neela Megha* composition from the *Shri Krishna Leela Taringini*. The dance began with a famous sloka (prayer) to Shri Krishna.

> "Kastuurii-Tilakam Lalaatta-Pattale Vakssah-Sthale Kaustubham
> Naasa-Agre Nava-Mauktikam Karatale Vennum Kare Kangkannam
> Sarva-Angge Haricandanam Sulalitam Kanntthe Ca Muktaavalim
> Gopa-Strii Parivessttito Vijayate Gopaala Cuuddaamannih
> 1: Salutations to Gopala Who is adorned with the Sacred Marks of Kasturi (Musk) on His Forehead and Kaustubha Jewel on His Chest,
> 2: His Nose is decorated with a Shining Pearl, the Palms of His Hands are gently holding a Flute, the Hands themselves are beautifully decorated with Bracelets,
> 3: His Whole Body is Smeared with Sandal Paste, as if Playfully anointed, and His Neck is decorated with a Necklace of Pearls,
> 4: Surrounded by the Cowherd Woman, Gopala is Shining in their middle in Celebration like a Jewel on the Head."[402]

As I danced this prayer at my *Rangapravesam*[403], I prayed to Shri Krishna with a description of Shri Krishna's beauty. It also felt as if I was describing my own body as a part of Shri Krishna's body. I smelled sweet fragrant sandalwood while I placed the

symbolic sandalwood on my third eye to signify the inner eye of Shri Krishna. The third eye is not a literal "third eye" but rather a metaphorical third eye that symbolizes the ability to maintain an inner vision that allows you to see spiritually.

This is the "Kasturi Tilakam" dance pose where the dance shows the inner, spiritual eye of Shri Krishna as related in the *Kasturi Tilakam* sloka (prayer).

My inner third eye felt awakened in a sense that allowed me to embody the characters of the dance. I drew three lines on my forehead to represent the Divine Trinity, Bramha, Vishnu, and Shiva, who is part of Shri Krishna. This reminded me that I was created by Bramha, am sustained by Vishnu, and could be destroyed by Shiva. I showed the sacred Kaustubham jewel that adorns Shri Krishna with divinity. The jewels that adorned my body as the dancer reminded me of the radiance of Shri Krishna. The divine Mahalakshmi dwells in Shri Krishna's heart. As I portray this, I feel the presence of Shri Krishna in my heart. Shri Krishna has another sacred jewel on his nose. He plays the melodious flute that calms my soul. Bracelets adorn Shri Krishna's wrists. His whole body radiates with the sweet, fragrant smell of sandalwood. Shri Krishna has a sacred

garland of flowers around his neck. He grants moksha (liberation) to all of the Gopikas (milkmaids) who surround him. The poorest human has great wealth in moksha (liberation) granted by the divine Shri Krishna. This is who I pray to for moksha (liberation) upon my death as I aim to merge back to the One Supreme Being of Hinduism. This prayer essentially reminds me that I came from the One Supreme Being of Hinduism. As the dancer, I feel spiritually prepared to embody the divine leelas (actions) that occurred during Shri Krishna's incarnation on earth. I feel that I am the instrument that Shri Krishna uses to teach about his divine birth on earth.

After the prayer, I begin to embody the characters of the Shri Krishna leelas. First, I embody Mother Yashoda who rocks baby Krishna to sleep. Mother Yashoda plays with baby Krishna as she holds his little fingers while she teaches him to walk. She feeds him milk when he is hungry. As I embody Mother Yashoda, I feel blessed to have an incarnation of a Supreme Being as my loved young one. I feel tears around my eyes because I am filled with joy to serve as Shri Krishna's mother during the dance drama. Soon, I portray Shri Krishna as a young boy who plays with his friends. Shri Krishna urges his friends to help him get some sweet butter to eat from the home of a sleeping Gopika (milkmaid).

I felt as if Shri Krishna gave me permission to embody him through dance because the dance gestures and expressions flowed organically as I danced. It seemed as if I was his instrument that he played through the dance gestures and facial expressions. Many Hindus in the audience laughed when I rubbed my tummy as a sign of hunger. The audience cheered as I portrayed the famous scene where the young Shri Krishna finally

ate the butter he seemingly plotted to steal. I did not feel as if I could completely embody Shri Krishna, but rather felt that I worshipped Shri Krishna through dance in a sense that acknowledged that I am part of Shri Krishna.

Soon after Shri Krishna and his friends ate the butter at the home of the sleeping Gopika (milkmaid), Shri Krishna hides because the mother-in-law enters. In the role of the mother-in-law, I showed anger at the mess of the empty pots of butter. I then became the Gopika who caught Shri Krishna hiding in the corner. The Gopika scolded Shri Krishna but then, as I turned to portray young Shri Krishna, I pouted as I opened my mouth at the Gopika's request. As the Gopika, I saw the whole three worlds in Shri Krishna's mouth which made me realize that Shri Krishna did not steal sweet butter because he is an incarnation of the Supreme Being to whom everything in the world emerges from and merges to. I felt as if I was indeed a Gopika in the age of Dwapar Yug in the village of Gokul with young Shri Krishna. It seemed as if Shri Krishna was indeed there on the stage with me. Shri Krishna blessed me as the dancer so that I could see the whole three worlds in his mouth. With tears of immense joy in my eyes, I as the Gopika, feed Shri Krishna more sweet butter and then I embrace Krishna with a hug just as a mother would embrace a child. Here, I feel united with One Supreme Being. This incredible feeling of Oneness helps me to prepare to engage in the dance meditation within the *Tarangam* dance.

I describe Shri Krishna's majestic, elephant-like walk. I remind myself that his face is adorned with the kasturi mark that represents his inner, spiritual eye. His physical eyes are as beautiful as lotus-like petals. I feel like a Gopika (milkmaid) who is

fascinated by Shri Krishna's beauty that is like Cupid. Shri Krishna vanquishes all that is evil and restores goodness. As I dance this, I feel that I am ready to engage in a dance meditation. I close my eyes, clasp my hands, and sincerely pray with devotion in front of my lota (pot) and taari (plate). Once I have said my prayers, I bow to the pot of water and place the pot of water on my head to signify my responsibilities in this world that I carry with ease because of Shri Krishna's blessings.

I feel a cool, soothing, feeling flow down to my toes as I place the cool, pot of water on my head. I trust my body intuitively to dance without thinking about the choreographed movements that are part of the dance meditation. The audience cheered many times during the dance in a manner that caused me to feel that they understood the sacredness of my every movement. I felt as if the auditorium filled with a cool, calming aura even though my family and many others told me that they were nervous on the edge of their seats because they were worried for me.

After I danced with the pot on my head, I returned to pray in front of my plate. I then stood in the middle of my plate as I felt a cool, soothing spiritual energy unite my body from my toes to my head. I placed my feet on the rims of the plate and positioned myself to dance to the live orchestra. As I began to move with my feet on the rims of the plate and the pot of water on my head, the audience cheered and cheered. This filled my being with even more energy because I sensed that the audience was blessing me with warm wishes as I danced. I had tears in my eyes because I could not believe that I was a mortal living on earth in the Alexander X. O'Connor Auditorium of Bayonne High School where I graduated high school in Bayonne, New Jersey, the town where I spent

my early infant, toddler, childhood, and teenage years. It was an honor to rent the auditorium that was a part of the high school I went to as a teenager. I could not believe that this was indeed real because I felt as if I was in the clouds of a glorious heaven where only blessings and goodness surrounded me. I will never forget this perfect moment of spirituality that I felt on earth as a mortal in this lifetime. It was as if I was connected to a Supreme Being in a profound manner but also connected to my body and the earth that I live upon. I also felt connected to the audience whose well wishes caused me to feel continuously and incredibly blessed.

I experience Hinduism as monist when I dance the *Tarangam* dance. My mind and body become one entity that acknowledges the heavy responsibilities that I carry in this world that I am bound to. I have emerged from Satchitanand (Supreme Being) and pray to attain moksha (liberation), which will cause me to merge back to Satchitanand (Supreme Being) upon my mortal death.

I will carry the blessings that I felt in that moment every time I dance that same version of the *Tarangam* dance. At *Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance*[404], I danced a live recording of the *Tarangam* danced that I performed at my *Rangapravesam*. As I danced, I could literally hear the cheers of the audience and feel the blessings of the audience in

the music that played. Returning back to the *Tarangam* that I performed at my *Rangpravesam*, I placed the pot of water down as the audience cheered with a great, spiritual energy. I danced some more to intricate rhythmic beats. After, I came out of the plate and placed it with my feet in front of my pot. I described the great Narayana Theerta who composed the *Tarangam* lyrics and prayed to Shri Krishna for blessings. I put my pot in my plate, blessed the audience by sprinkling water from the stage to the audience, and exited the stage. As I did this, tears filled my eyes because I could not believe that I danced the *Tarangam* dance as a mortal woman. I felt as if I returned to Earth from heaven as I exited the stage. It was one of the most profound spiritual moments of my mortal life. After the *Tarangam* dance, I felt that I had engaged in a puja[405] while I was on stage. I felt that a Supreme Being entered my spiritual being and allowed me to forgive myself for any mistakes that I made during my existence in this human life. It was as if a Supreme Being forgave me for any unintentional paapa (sinful) behaviors or emotions in a sense that caused me to feel that I was on a path of moksha (liberation) through the medium of dance. I felt content with my life and freed of overly lavish worldly desires.

My phenomenological experience as a *Tarangam* dancer causes me to feel that my mind helped to lead my body to dance, which caused a divine energy to develop and fill my body with spirituality. I sensed that my mind and body were One entity that emerged from a Supreme Being. Through the dance, I felt that my spiritual eye saw a divine presence around me that ensured me that as a dancer, I am on a path towards moksha (liberation) upon death. If I attain moksha (liberation), then I will merge back to

a Supreme Being upon death and if not, then I will reincarnate in the hope of eventually attaining moksha (liberation) upon death in the next lifetime. Essentially though, my phenomenological experiences cause me to feel that Hinduism is monistic since the only real reality is the Supreme Consciousness of Satchitanand (Supreme Being). While my phenomenological experiences are heavily faith-based, I consider it necessary to share this because it influences my own epistemological framework as a Hindu dancer, which in turn influences my pedagogy in academia. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Kuchipudi dance pedagogy is deeply embedded with the epistemological framework of Hinduism. It is crucial for me to maintain an awareness of my epistemological framework in a manner that helps me to understand my role in teaching and learning.

Leon Tikly, a postcolonial educator, urges educators to acknowledge the need to move beyond one particular epistemological framework as the only source of emancipation. Tikly writes,

> "Rather than posit one 'knowledge as emancipation,' it requires recognizing the multitude of voices of the marginalized and working toward a theory of translation, a hermeneutics that makes it possible for the needs, aspirations, and practices of a community to be understood by another."[406]

When one epistemological framework is acknowledged as the sole source of emancipatory knowledge, then the epistemological frameworks of others become subordinate to the dominant ideology. This fosters colonizing agendas in a hidden curriculum because the voices of the subordinate become submissive. I do not aim to be a colonizer who forces my own way of coming to know the world and my place in the world onto others. On the contrary, my goal is to share how my metaphysical framework influences my own epistemology of how I know what I know about the world and my

place in it. I wish for my voice to be recognized as a part of the multitude of voices in a manner that helps non-Hindus understand how my experiences contribute to who I am as a postcolonial educator. Moreover, I urge educators to present Hinduism based on the history of Hinduism, as Hinduism understands its history, as opposed to fictionalized, imagined accounts of Hinduism that succumb to Western versions of what Hinduism ought to be. I will now continue to discuss the metaphysical complexity of Hinduism as I explore monotheism and polytheism.

*Monotheism or Polytheism*

The issue of the One and the Many is an introductory but yet complex topic in Hinduism. Tulasidasa, a Hindu saint, writes in the *Ramayana*[407] that God is One. Even though there are many names and forms for the One God of Hinduism, this One God has no definite form or definite name.

> "Eka Aniiha Aruupa Anaamaa
> Aja Saccidaanamda Paradhaamaa
> Byaapaka Bisvaruupa Bhagavaanaa
> Tehim Dhari Deha Carita Krta Naanaa
> God, who is one, desireless, formless, nameless and unborn, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, who is Spirit Supreme, all-pervading, universal, has become incarnate and performed many deeds."[408]

God, in Hinduism, is a universal Supreme Spirit that incarnates in several forms to perform deeds with the intention to teach humankind about ethics. Whenever evil reaches its height, the Supreme Being promises to incarnate to restore goodness and reassure the people that good will always triumph over evil. This is the point where the controversy arises. The several different incarnations of the One are in some cases seen as polytheistic. This does not seem like an adequate representation of polytheism.[409]

Whether the Supreme Being is known as Shri Rama, Shri Krishna, Shivaji, Durga Devi Maa, the names are still a representation of One according to the above sloka (prayer). Ultimately in Hinduism, the Supreme Being is a universal spirit of Satchitanand, which is "Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss".

The Merriam-Webster dictionary[410] defines polytheism as, "belief in or worship of more than One God" and defines monotheism as, "the doctrine or belief that there is but one God." If Hinduism believes that there is more than One God, then it seems that Hinduism is polytheistic. On the contrary, if Hindus believe there is One God, then this indicates that Hinduism is monotheistic. The question is how many Gods does Hinduism have? Shri Krishna, an incarnation of the Supreme Being, answers this question in the ancient Bhagavad Gita.

> "Asvatthah Sarvavrksaanaam Devarsiinaam Ca Naaradah
> Gandharvaanaam Citrarathah Siddhaanaam Kapilo Munih
> Among all trees, I am the Ashvattha (the holy fig tree); among the devarishis (divine sages), I am Narada; among the Gandharvas (demigods), I am Chitraratha; among the siddhas (successful liberated beings), I am the muni (saint) Kapila."[411]

Essentially, the verse indicates that One formless God assumes different forms for different purposes. For the trees, God is the "holy fig tree"; for the divine sages, God is "Narada"; for liberated beings, God is the "saint". While this may seem as if there is more than One God, this is not necessarily the case. One God assumes whichever form we need God to represent for us. Just as one person may have many names including nicknames, God also has several different names, but nonetheless is still One Supreme Being.

In the ancient Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna says,

> "Aham Sarvasya Prabhavo Mattah Sarvam Pravartate
> Iti Matvaa Bhajante Maam Budhaa Bhaavasamanvitah (8)
> I am the source of everything; from Me all creation emerges. With this realization the wise, awestricken, adore me."[412]

From a Hindu perspective, although I do not claim to generalize that all Hindus maintain this perspective, "I" refers to One Supreme Being. Shri Krishna says, "I", but it is safe to assume that "I" transcends the incarnation of Shri Krishna because Shri Krishna is part of a Supreme Being. Shri Krishna's "I" is a powerful "I" that refers to the One Supreme Being that some call Adonai, Allah, Christ, Hari, etc. For this reason, I view Hinduism as a monotheistic religion. The abovementioned definition of monotheism calls for a belief in One God. There is One Supreme Being in Hinduism. Therefore, I believe Hinduism is a monotheistic religion. While I understand that many view Hinduism as polytheistic as opposed to monotheistic for many logical reasons, it is difficult to argue against the monistic nature of Hinduism. I experience a phenomenon of Hinduism as monistic as Kuchipudi dancer.

To elaborate further on the monistic nature of Hinduism, I will share the creation of the world according to Hinduism because it contributes to how I develop my epistemological framework as a Hindu dancer. Many Hindu scriptures relate the creation of the world. I will focus on the metaphysical nature of the creation of the world in the *Panchadasi*[413] scripture by Sri Vidyaranya Swami. The *Panchadasi* describes Ultimate Reality as Sat (Existence of Truth), Chit (Consciousness), and Anand (Bliss). Thus, many Hindus refer to a Supreme Being as Satchitanand (truth, consciousness, and bliss). Here, for the purposes of this discussion, I will refer to God as Satchitanand, who decides to create an illusionary reality called the world of Maya. While the world of Maya is an

illusion, it is still a part of reality because it occurs, although it is not the Ultimate Reality that we find in Satchitanand (Supreme Being).

According to Hindu metaphysics of the *Panchadasi*[414] scripture, Satchitanand (Supreme Being) uses three main ingredients to create the world of Maya (illusion). The three main characteristics that emerge from Satchitanand (Supreme Being) to create the world of Maya (illusion) are satva, which is purity, rajas, which is a combination of purity and impurity, and tamas, which is a combination of purity and impurity. Each of the three qualities has a slight element of each other. For example, satva or purity has a little bit of rajas and also tamas, although one may say satva is ninety-nine percent pure. The incarnations of Satchitanand (Supreme Being) are due to the satva quality that God created. For this reason, the incarnations are the closest to Satchitanand (Supreme Being) that those within the world of Maya (illusion) could experience as a part of reality. For this reason, Hindus worship One Ultimate Supreme Being in several forms such as Shri Rama, Shri Krishna, etc. with the hope of leaving the world of Maya (illusion) upon death and merging back to Satchitanand (Supreme Being) for eternal rest. Many may wonder about the role of reincarnation if the goal is to merge with Satchitanand (Supreme Being) upon death. If Satchitanand (Supreme Being) decides that the individual did not earn eternal rest, then Satchitanand (Supreme Being) places the individual back into the world of Maya (illusion) until the individual is worthy for eternal rest with Satchitanand (Supreme Being).

While metaphysicians may argue that there is a dualistic nature between the Ultimate Reality of Satchitanand (Supreme Being) and the world of Maya (illusion),

there is also an argument for the monistic nature of Hinduism in the creation of the world. Hindu scriptures indicate that we emerge from Satchitanand (Supreme Being) and merge back to Satchitanand (Supreme Being). According to this metaphysical framework, we are a part of a Supreme Being and a Supreme Being is a part of us whether we acknowledge this or not. While it may seem that the world of Satchitanand (Supreme Being) and the world of Maya (illusion) are distinct, the world of Maya (illusion) exists as part of Satchitanand (Supreme Being) and thus, is a part of the monistic nature of Satchitanand (Supreme Being).

This metaphysical framework of the creation of the world influences my epistemological framework as a Hindu dancer. I believe in the monistic nature of Hinduism. This influences my pedagogy in academia. While I do not wish to impose a Hindu metaphysical or epistemological framework onto non-Hindus, I do aim to present this metaphysical claim and the influences of this claim on my own epistemology. I hope to help non-Hindus understand the metaphysics of Hinduism and then deliberate about Hinduism to develop informed claims, whatever these claims may be to each individual. My main point here is that while many will still view Hinduism as polytheistic or dualistic, it is important to first understand Hinduism and then develop a logical argument.

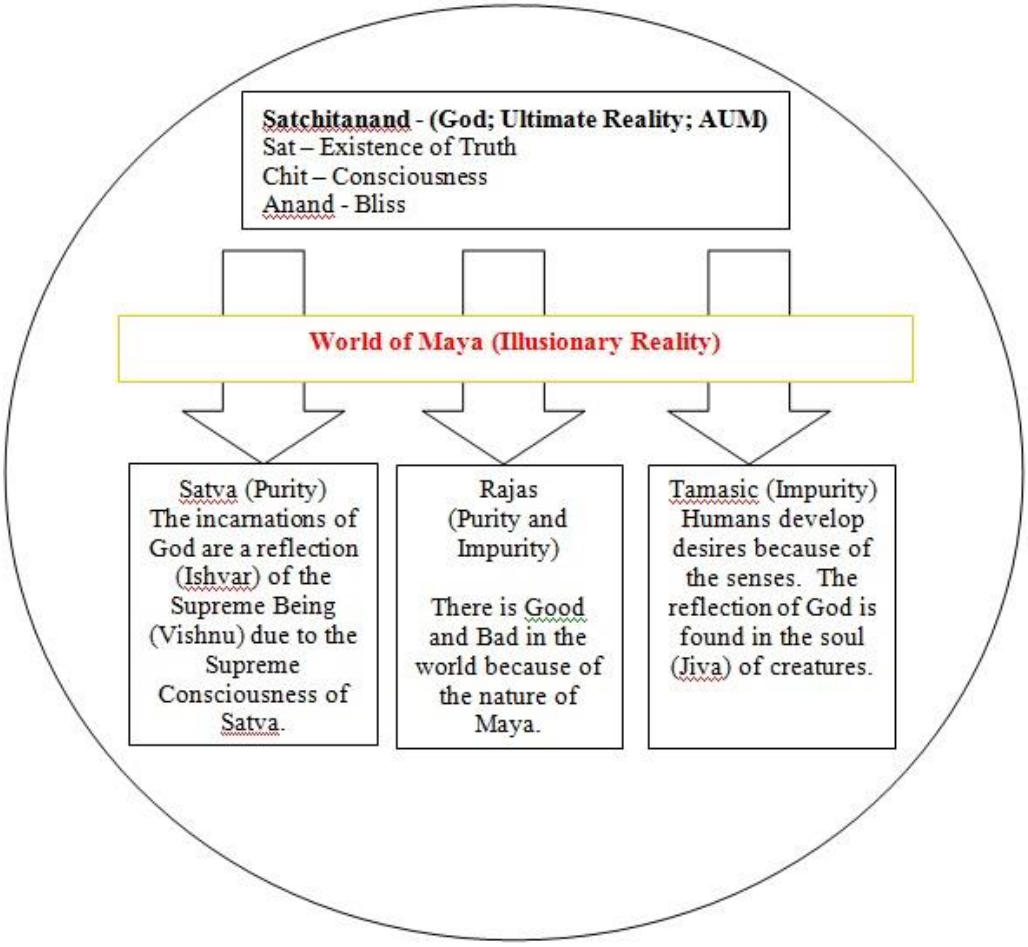



DIAGRAM 1 – The above diagram aims to show the monistic nature of Hinduism. While the Ultimate Reality and the world of Maya (illusion) may seem dualistic, the world of Maya (illusion) emerges from Satchitanand (Supreme Being) and will merge back to Satchitanand (Supreme Being) upon non-existence. Hinduism is metaphysically monist.

It is crucial for non-Hindus to understand the abovementioned metaphysical framework of Hinduism while developing knowledge about Hinduism. The comprehension of Hinduism from a Hindu perspective is imperative to the decolonization of Hinduism and Indian culture. The hidden curriculum of the West that does not comprehend Hinduism from a Hindu perspective creates an imagined version of

Hinduism. This is precisely why it is crucial to employ a postcolonial pedagogy that confronts the hidden curriculum. Nina Asher, a postcolonial educator, points to the urgency of postcolonial pedagogy.

> "The history of colonization and its effects, including the erasure of such histories from official curriculum, continue to shape relations of power as well as patterns of production and consumption."[415]

The curriculum in academia continues to endorse colonization, albeit in a concealed manner, if the curriculum is designed to shape a relationship that fosters one particular metaphysical framework and epistemological framework over the other. Furthermore, colonization continues when Hinduism and Indian culture is presented in a hidden curriculum that is based on a discourse that portrays a fictionalized Hinduism and imagined Indian culture. In turn, students become a part of a hidden system where they learn false histories about seemingly foreign religions and cultures in a manner that disavows the past and furthers the dichotomy between "them" and the "others". To prevent this, I endorse a postcolonial approach to education that reveals the colonizing agendas in hidden curriculums. With a postcolonial approach to education in mind, I turn to discuss the metaphysical complexity of monism and dualism in Hinduism. While monotheism is a theological term, monism is a metaphysical term that is also appropriate for Hinduism.

*Monism and Dualism*

According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*,[416]

> "Monism is a philosophical term which, in its various meanings, is opposed to Dualism or Pluralism. Wherever pluralistic philosophy distinguishes a multiplicity of things, Monism denies that the manifoldness is real, and holds that the apparently many are phases, or phenomena, of a one. Wherever dualistic

> philosophy distinguishes between body and soul, matter and spirit, object and subject, matter and force, the system which denies such a distinction, reduces one term of the antithesis to the other, or merges both in a higher unity, is called Monism."

The term "monism" is not necessarily a solely religious term that indicates that a higher unity is

God. Monism is a philosophical term used to describe the phenomena which reality emerges from and merges in. Even when there is an acknowledgement of dualistic opposites, the antithesis is all a part of One higher unity. If this is the case, then the *Bhagavad Gita* indicates that Hinduism is a monistic religion.

> "Aham Aatmaa Gudaakesa Sarvabhuutaasayasthitah
> Aham Aadis Ca Madhyam Ca Bhuutaanaam Anta Eva Ca (20)
> O Conqueror of Sleep (Arjuna)! I am the Self in the heart of all creatures: I am their Origin, Existence, and Finality."[417]

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Shri Krishna, an incarnation of the One Supreme Being, speaks to Arjuna. Shri Krishna says that He is the "Origin, Existence, and Finality" of all creatures. This indicates that everything emerges from God and merges back into God. While monism is a philosophical term that does not necessarily call the ultimate reality God, monism implies that there is a philosophical belief in One ultimate reality. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, Hinduism believes in One ultimate reality, which therefore indicates that Hinduism is a monotheistic religion.

On the contrary, some view Hinduism as a dualistic religion. According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*[418],

> "*First*, the name has been used to denote the religious or theological system which would explain the universe as the outcome of two eternally opposed and coexisting principles, conceived as good and evil, light and darkness, or some other form of conflicting powers. *Second*, the term dualism is employed in

> opposition to monism, to signify the ordinary view that the existing universe contains two radically distinct kinds of being or substance — matter and spirit, body and mind. This is the most frequent use of the name in modern philosophy, where it is commonly contrasted with monism. But it should not be forgotten that dualism in this sense is quite reconcilable with a monistic origin of all things."

Hindu scriptures do not explain the creation of the universe based on "two eternally opposed and coexisting principles". Yogananda[419] writes about God's creation of dualities in the world. There is the mind and the body, good and evil, and so forth. However, some individuals view these dualities as very distinct substances.[420] Some individuals believe one of the substances is an illusion whereas the other substance is reality. Yogananda indicates that the individual who views the body and all of the entities of this world as an illusion that is part of a Supreme Being's maya (illusion) and views the Spirit as reality lives according to Hindu ethics. For this reason, I believe that the body and the mind are important to nurture but the Soul is the real substance that guides the body to live well on Earth with the aim to attain moksha (liberation) by a Supreme Being upon death. In most cases, this is the reason that many Hindus are cremated upon death.

I consider it necessary to share my monistic metaphysical framework of Hinduism because it has an impact on who I am as a Hindu dancer who educates non-Hindus about Hinduism. I hope to share who I am as a Hindu dancer with the individuals who view my dances. Furthermore, the comprehension of a monistic, Hindu, metaphysical framework should help viewers, whether believers of monism or dualism, to understand Hinduism from a de-Orientalized perspective. Nina Asher relates the importance of self-reflexivity as an element of decolonization.

> "The work of decolonization entails not only our self-reflexive efforts to work through mind-numbing alienation and essentializing divides, but also the commitment to transformation in social and educational contexts."[421]

As Asher indicates, decolonization requires a self-reflexive effort to understand the alienation that divides religions and cultures and also understand the potential for transformation. Therefore, I need to understand how my self-reflexive position has the potential to alienate me but also has the possibility to transform me as an educator. For this reason, it is crucial for me to develop an awareness of how my metaphysical framework of Hinduism impacts on my ability to educate non-Hindus with the goal of a de-colonized transformation.

*Returning to Otto*

As I teach in a variety of pedagogical spaces,[422] I aim to help non-Hindus understand the metaphysical, monistic framework that influences Hinduism. I consider it necessary for non-Hindus to comprehend the claims of Hinduism before coming to any sort of conclusion about Hinduism. In the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned Otto's claim about Hinduism. To recap, Otto stated,

> "The negative evaluation of the world in Hinduism means…that it can never aspire to be a fully ethical religion, for only by a positive evaluation of the world as it is evident in Christianity can the world become the sphere of service to the Divine Will. Only when the divine is recognized both as the valuable in itself and as the ground and source of all mundane values can the Holy be said to be properly apprehended. Consequently, the Indian tradition fails to properly value the Holy as a complex of the rational and nonrational elements."[423]

Otto, a respected theologian who in some ways was ahead of his time, did not comprehend the metaphysical claims of Hinduism as it pertains to the complexities of the "rational and nonrational elements". Unlike scholars of the 1800s such as Ralph Waldo

Emerson[424] and Henry David Thoreau[425] who read Asian philosophy in a manner that did not enforce a superior/inferior bias, Otto, who writes in the 1900s, enforces Christianity as superior to Hinduism. Otto claims that Hindus do not understand the complexities of the divine. Hindus, who live according to Hinduism, aim to use the mind to control the body, and fill the body with a divine energy that causes the performance of actions that leads towards moksha (liberation) upon death. As I mentioned earlier, Hinduism believes that Satchitanand is the Supreme consciousness where all creation emerges from and merges back to. While Otto emphasizes the ethical capabilities of Christianity, he does so in a manner that dismisses the complexities of Hinduism.

Similarly, many scholars[426] who follow Otto continue to also gloss over or simply dismiss the metaphysical complexities of Hinduism such as its monistic nature. Scholars need to refer back to Hindu scriptures to learn about the metaphysics of Hinduism. If scholars look to misrepresentative non-Hindu sources to explain its metaphysics, then there is the possibility that a hidden curriculum will Orientalize Hinduism based on Western expectations of what Hinduism is. This reinforces the legacy of colonization that pushes Hindus to conform to the religious and cultural practices of non-Hindus, particularly of the West. This intellectual colonization influences the economic, social, and political reality of the colonized.

With the effects of intellectual colonization in mind, I aim to disrupt the legacy of colonization as I engage in Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. Through dance, I hope to shed light on the hidden curriculum that accepts Western versions of Hinduism, which in turn furthers Orientalism. As a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, I do

not fall prey to intimidation from scholars of the West who insist on an exoticized and Orientalized approach to Hinduism. Rather I dance against these expectations as I warrant a sacred gaze that unveils the hidden curriculum of Hindu metaphysics as taught by non-Hindus who misrepresent Hinduism. I aim to teach non-Hindus about Hinduism based on what Hinduism is and not what the legacy of colonialism wants Hinduism to be.

The hidden curriculum causes Hinduism to become misrepresented based on the hidden curriculum of the West that creates an imagined Hinduism. For this reason, it is crucial to engage in de-Orientalized pedagogy that maintains an awareness of the postcolonial challenges present in education. If non-Hindus of the West and Hindus aim to comprehend the religious and cultural claims of each respective tradition, then there is an opportunity for a representative discourse that does not aim to evangelize but rather hopes to respectfully understand without promoting colonizing legacies or Orientalism.

As I continue to emphasize the need for de-Orientalized pedagogy, I will now turn to focus on the Orientalized notions of Hindu epics as mythology and de-Orientalized notions of Hinduism as history. While this might seem like a dichotomy, I do not claim that Hindu epics are accurately placed into the category of “mythology” or the category of “history”. On the contrary, the Hindu epics are quite complex which provokes the need to examine an existentialist approach to Hinduism and Hindu dance in the next chapter.

# Chapter 7 Religious Epistemology With a Focus on the *Ramayana*

The complexity of the Hindu epics is beyond the neat categories of history or mythology, fact or fiction, philosophy or religion. Yet, Orientalists attempt to rewrite the history of the Hindu epics to meet Western expectations, especially to fit into Western genres of literature, and destroy the religious epistemological framework of Indians, whether these Indians were Hindu or non-Hindu. Keep in mind that I use the term "epic" to describe the history and poetry of Hinduism for a lack of a more appropriate English word. The issue does not concern distinguishing a "true" history from a "false" rewritten history. Rather, my concern is when Orientalists rewrite the history and poetry of Hinduism with a colonialist ideology that Orientalizes Hinduism. While some creative Western versions of the Hindu epics enhance Hinduism, other versions are harmful to the tradition because of the colonizing ideology used to develop the Orientalized pieces. Regardless, these rewritten histories of the Hindu epics are then used in academia to teach about Hinduism.

I confront this when I am invited to teach about Hinduism in higher education. Those who are exposed to rewritten histories of Hinduism have preconceived notions about the epics, which influence the gaze that I sense as I dance the epics. Misrepresented preconceived notions of the epics may block an educational and sacred gaze. For this reason, this concern of Hinduism as history emerges as a theme throughout my self-study. As I examine my self-study data, I realize that there is a need for me to address the genre of Hindu literature because this is often misrepresented in higher education. My self-study data reveals the need for me to specifically outline my

epistemological framework regarding the Hindu epics. When I dance the Hindu epics, I must always explain why I believe in these epics as a part of Hinduism.

Through a creation of an imaginary notion of the history of Hinduism as mere "stories", the Orientalists imposed a Western epistemological framework onto so-called delusional Indians who were seen as unfamiliar with their very own history. These Orientalists merely dismissed the religious epistemological framework of Indians who *were* familiar with their own history but whose voices were silenced by the legacy of colonization. I must confront this, because some label me as delusional because I believe in Hinduism as history. For this reason, many do not understand my religious epistemological framework as a faith-based Hindu. This blocks the educational gaze that should attempt to first understand my religious epistemological framework and then offer comments or criticisms.

In this chapter, I will specifically focus on religious epistemology as a valid epistemological framework for coming to know the world despite the colonizing legacy of Orientalism. I will refute the claim that the Hindu epics are mythology. My goal is to rehabilitate the Hindu epics as a part of Hindu history and as a valid part of an Indian educational curriculum. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus my attention specifically on the Hindu epic the *Ramayana*[427] because the *Ramayana* is often seen as mythology due to the seemingly fantasy-like characters. While I share archaeological evidence of the historicity of the *Ramayana*, I do not aim to prove the *Ramayana* is history. The idea of the *Ramayana* is in and of itself historical and thus plays a crucial role in the religious epistemological development of Hindus. I will point to how

Orientalists moved the educational curriculum of India from Indian history, as it is understood by Hindus versed in the epics, to an Orientalist curriculum that aimed to change the religious epistemological framework of Indians. To this extent, I will relate how an Indian himself, Michael Madhusudana Datta (Dutt),[428] moved from a Hindu boy born into a Hindu family to an Orientalized product of a colonizing curriculum of British India that caused Orientalism to thrive as Indians themselves became Orientalists who aimed to destroy the religious epistemological framework of Hindus.

Through the lens of religious epistemology, I aim to show that I and other faith-based Hindus are not delusional. My faith in Hinduism is evident as I dance the epics, because I do not view the epics as mythology. Regardless of whether the epics are literal, historical, or mythological is not the case. My self-study reveals that when I dance the epics, it is evident that I believe in the epics as historical in the sense that the ideas themselves are historical. It is important to note that my goal is not to rely on Western science or anthropology to prove Indian history as Indians versed in the epics relate. However, I aim to move into a discussion of science and anthropological sources to help those who maintain a Western epistemological framework move towards a pedagogical space of hybridity to create a sense of openness to understanding a Hindu epistemological framework. From an analysis of my self-study data, I developed a pedagogical process for teaching the epics. The epics are an ethical stimulus for moral inquiry. I aim to share how the epics help to develop philosophical questions about ethics. When I dance the epics, I offer guiding questions to the viewers. The inquiry is crucial to the purpose of the epics. For this reason, it is imperative to reevaluate the function of the Hindu epics

historically. My goal is to reframe the Hindu epics in the hope that this will help viewers of my dances about the epics build background knowledge of them based on de-Orientalized pedagogy.

Keep in mind that I do not wish to return to a pure text of the *Ramayana*, since there is no original or pure text that could maintain accuracy. While the text of Valimiki[429] is considered an original source, Shivaji[430] (Manifestation of Hindu Supreme Being) is the original narrator of the *Ramayana*. Since Shivaji is a manifestation of the One Supreme Being of Hinduism, it is impossible in this lifetime to look for an untainted origin of the *Ramayana* among mortals. Although many individuals might aim to recreate the *Ramayana*, it is impossible to return to a purely historical, accurate depiction. From a postcolonial perspective, we are in a cultural space as human beings that is always contaminated and never in entirety pure.

*Religious Epistemology*

There is a need to reevaluate the role of religious epistemology in knowledge development, because this will determine what is taught in an educational curriculum.[431] Moreover, there is pressing need to un-silence the silenced voices of those who are seen as intellectually incapable because their epistemological frameworks do not match a so-called standard set by the West through imperialism. I consider it necessary to point to Western philosophers and theologians who acknowledge the profound sense of religious epistemology to show how Orientalists used a particular Western epistemological framework that transformed in the West throughout time.

To begin with, some scholars employ a historical method to study key religious figures across religions. For instance, Albert Schweitzer uses a historical method in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*[432] to portray the life of Jesus. Schweitzer critiques eighteenth century theologians[433] who studied Jesus to justify an edifying moral philosophy of religion. According to Schweitzer, we need to interpret the life of Jesus based on Jesus's own convictions as opposed to the convictions that we impose on Jesus. Schweitzer offers valuable insight into the study of religious figures as he focuses on the importance of a historical rather than a mythological, fictitious interpretation that, in Said's terms, would cause Orientalism to thrive. Schweitzer suggests scholars develop interpretations based on what he considers to be the "facts". Although Schweitzer provides a helpful method to think about religious figures, he misses the point of religious epistemology as a faith-based way of knowing.

> "Some of the Western thinkers like Albert Schweitzer have pronounced that India, despite having an ancient and rich spiritual and cultural tradition, has no book of ethics that can serve as a practical life-guide like Aristotle's *Nichomechean Ethics*, Cicero's *Good Life*, and Kant's treatise on *Pure and Practical Reason*. As a consequence, the Indians live in a state of constant mystical longing seeking the truth even while denying material pursuits to them. The pronouncements such as these do not hold ground because the Indian epics are essentially different from the Western epics that speak mainly about the exploits of their heroes."[434]

Schweitzer compares sacred Eastern historical texts to Western philosophical texts. He acknowledges that Aristotle, Cicero, and Kant provide a stimulus for epistemological development, but dismisses the religious epistemological framework of Indians. While Western epics focus on the exploits of heroes, the Hindu epics intertwine the history of India with Hindu philosophy in a manner that focuses on a transcendent

reality of a Supreme Being. This is a valid way of knowing the world for faith-based Hindus who believe in the historicity of Hindu scriptures.

According to several philosophers and theologians, [435] it is not in a human's epistemological capacity to accurately depict the transcendent reality of a Supreme Being as a demonstrable truth. Because of this lack of an epistemological capacity, some pluralists think of religion as an irrelevant epistemological framework that is "indemonstrable, indeterminable, and thus irrelevant"[436] and do not accurately depict God. Regardless of what we come to believe, a Supreme Being is the only entity who knows the "truth". Religious epistemology helps people come to know what they know about the world. For this reason, Harvey Cox[437] dismisses the notion that religions will disappear. On the contrary, there is a global resurgence towards religious epistemology.[438] This may not necessarily be positive for humanity. While religion has the potential to help humanity thrive, religion also has the potential to create a web of hatred.[439] For instance, some people justify homophobia, misogyny, and/or terrorism on the basis of their religious beliefs.

Harvey Cox makes a distinction between faith and belief. [440] For Cox, faith focuses on an existential way of knowing regardless of hard, concrete facts. Belief develops based on opinions that people come to accept. Michael Kogan[441] declares that those individuals give up on the religious aspect of nature if they need to employ logical reasoning to explain the everyday miracles of life. Kogan[442] says these individuals are blind to God's hand in the everyday miraculousness of nature. Yet, religious people subjectively believe in the sacred, transcendent reality of God without any need for

logical reasoning. Religious claims[443] are quite different from verifiable physical facts based on empirical evidence or logical reasoning that develops from analytic proof. Therefore, the religious believer need not employ logical reasoning to prove religious claims. On the contrary, religious truths are a part of an individual's subjectivity that is based on faith. Harvey Cox uses the term *religiousness*[444] to focus on the individual's faith that has the capacity to transform the world. *Religiousness* focuses on what it means to be a religious person. Through the lens of Cox, people do not want to accept religious dogma but rather they desire a spiritual connectedness to a Divine entity. This spirituality has the ability to transform people and how they come to know the world.

In Cox's seminal work, *The Future of Faith*,[445] he describes three ages of religion. First, Cox discusses the Age of Faith, which lasted from the time of Jesus to the fourth century. During the first three to four hundred years of Christian history, being a Christian meant being a disciple of Jesus. There was no need for creeds or a hierarchal structure. Second, Cox relates the Age of Belief. During this age, Christians began to adhere to creeds and religious authority because that was what it meant to be a Christian. Currently, we are in the Age of Spirit. In this age, there is a great deal of emphasis on being touched by the life of Jesus. This is a period of reformation that profoundly impacts on Christianity across the globe. People now resist being told what to believe based on authority. Instead, there is a need to have a direct experience with the Divine. Being Christian is not defined by a hierarchy of authority but rather is defined by meaningful experiences.

Faith is central to religious belief that fosters a transcendent relationship with an infinite Supreme Being. The faith-based religious individual develops a subjective understanding of a Supreme Being as an infinite truth. Kogan proclaims,

> "Faith is the passionate relationship of the individual to the truth of his life. That religious truth is an infinite truth; it is God. The religious person believes passionately in that truth. Her belief is, by definition, subjective. It is not knowledge. It cannot be demonstrated to correspond to any objective fact. This is because all the terms of the religious relationship of the human person and God are not finite, earthly terms."[446]

Here, faith is used to foster a subjective understanding of infinite religious truths whereas empirical and logical understanding is used to develop an understanding of finite, earthly truths. While Kogan makes a distinction between religious, infinite truth claims and earthly, finite truth claims, he also acknowledges that these claims are intertwined.[447] Nevertheless, his main point is that the atheist and/or agnostic might depend on logic whereas the faith-based religious believer depends on faith.

Similarly, Stephen T. Davis[448] asserts that religious epistemology is a valid way of coming to know the world. Davis provides a sound philosophical defense of religious epistemology in his seminal text *Faith, Skepticism, and Evidence*.[449] Davis also analyzes theistic claims in his text *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*.[450] The philosophical project of Davis reevaluates the uncertain certainty of faith, which Kogan also examines. Kogan states,

> "There is, and always must be, an irreducible element of uncertainty regarding the object of faith, the infinite pole of the relationship. But paradoxically, this necessary objective uncertainty serves to intensify the subjective certainty of the believer. Thus faith is a passionate subjective certainty regarding an objective uncertainty."[451]

Uncertainty is an element of faith that is irreducible to tangible, physical elements. The uncertainty of religious facts intensifies the subjective certainty of faith-based religious believers. This is because faith-based believers believe in the uncertainty as certainty without need for logical proof. The historicity of religious scriptures, the passing of religious rituals from generation to generation, and religious experiences are all the proof that faith-based religious believers need. William P. Alston[452] extensively writes about religious experience as a perceptual way of knowing. Religious experience provides individuals with a direct experience that justifies a religious epistemological framework that we should not dismiss. For Alston, there is a cognitive value in religious experience that moves beyond subjectivity.

This is not to say that philosophical inquiry is not a part of religion. On the contrary, philosophical inquiry is essential in the textual interpretation of scripture. Kogan rejects literal facticity because it misses the point of faith-infused religious belief. [453] Religious believers do not need literal facticity to influence religious belief that many come to recognize as religious truths. According to Kogan, fundamentalists who aim to prove the literal facticity of religion are similar to atheists who aim to disprove religion. It does not matter if scriptures are fact or fiction. What matters is the way the individuals philosophize about the scriptures, because this helps to shape epistemological beliefs about how individuals come to know what they know about the natural and supernatural.

Essentially, what is important is not that the scriptures relate events that actually happened but rather that the scriptures provide a stimulus for philosophical interpretation. Kogan affirms that,

> "We dare not deny bedrock convictions that have long characterized our faiths. Of course, the bottom line of textual interpretation is always the discussion of what the story means. Whether we take it literally or symbolically, the meaning beneath the surface is always the ultimate issue. However, we must ask the followers of our faith traditions to dismiss the question of whether the events related in the story ever happened."[454]

What Kogan suggests is that we do not start with the question of whether the events in religious scriptures happened. Rather this question is irrelevant because the faith-based individual believes in the certainty of the uncertainty of the scriptures. This individual does not need logical proof of God's miracles since the human epistemological framework is incapable of conceiving of an adequate proof of God's miracles. The faith-based believer endorses the bedrock convictions that are the pillars of religion. Religious epistemology aims to move beyond religion as literal facts and towards a philosophical interpretation that hopes to find the underlying meaning of religious scriptures.

Like the abovementioned philosophical interpretations, I start with the premise that a Supreme Being is indeed the first Ultimate cause that requires no proof. This is essentially a component of a faith-based religious believer as Kogan asserts.

> "And so we may be led by faith to affirm that the Scriptures speak of actual events – eternal truths expressed in real human experiences – to which we may subjectively commit ourselves while always acknowledging their objective uncertainty. These events are real; they are true; they *may* be fact….*We* must decide. *We* must determine the meaning of our own experiences."[455]

The faith-based religious believer subjectively endorses the eternal truths expressed in scriptures while simultaneously acknowledging objective uncertainty. This objective uncertainty is not problematic for the faith-based religious believer because humans do not have the epistemological capacity to understand scriptures as an objective certainty.

For the faith-based religious believer, religious claims do not require logical proof but rather require faith in a Supreme Being.

My faith as a Hindu leads me to affirm the historicity of the Hindu scriptures as eternal truths. I subjectively commit myself to the historicity of Hinduism while acknowledging that there is an objective uncertainty present in the history of Hinduism. This objective uncertainty is irrelevant to me because I do not need to prove the literal facticity of Hinduism. On the contrary, I am a faith-based Hindu whose subjective faith affirms Hinduism as real and true. It is beyond my epistemological capacity to conceive of a proof for the historicity of the Hindu scriptures. I do not aim to prove the Hindu scriptures as literal history but rather I aim to share how I come to believe in Hinduism with an objective uncertainty that does not require logical, literal proof. My religious beliefs that help me to develop my epistemological framework for Hinduism are based on faith.

To this extent, I aim to relate the Hindu epics with an objective uncertainty that is a religious truth for Hindus. Orientalists who consider the Hindu epics to be mere mythology dismiss the faith of Hindus who maintain a faith-based belief in the Hindu scriptures. Fundamentalists who aim to prove literal facticity and atheists and/or agnostics who dismiss religious scriptures miss the crucial point of faith-based religious belief. In this case, Orientalists misrepresent Hinduism when they assume that Hindu scriptures are mere mythology that consists of fictionalized fantasy. These Orientalists do not understand the nature of religious claims that call upon faith and not logical reasoning as proof. I do not aim to convert Orientalists or non-Hindus to Hinduism with

a faith-based belief. Instead, I aim to de-Orientalize Hinduism in a manner that confronts religious misrepresentations of the Hindu epics as fantasy. I also ask non-Hindus to maintain respect for the faith-based religious beliefs of Hindus as a subjective objective uncertainty that does not require logical proof.

*Confronting Mythological Claims*

The two main epics of Hinduism are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which are much more than epics and prose. They are Hindu religious scriptures written in the form of poetry. While the *Mahabharata* has great significance, I will focus on the *Ramayana* in this chapter. This is because several Eastern Religion courses and Asian Studies courses use the *Ramayana* as part of the required course texts. When I am invited to present and dance the *Ramayana*, I must confront the claim that the *Ramayana* is a fictionalized, fantasy-like "story" of Hinduism. I maintain that we cannot return to a pure text since this is beyond our epistemological capacity as humans. Yet, a de-Orientalized depiction of *Ramayana* provides a way to characterize the text for a thought-provoking ethical discourse that has the ability to provoke ethical inquiry.

While the main characters Shri Rama, Mata Sita, Bhaiya Lakshmana[456] are human, other essential characters are non-human. Shri Hanuman, the divine servant of Shri Rama, is of the ape race. Sugreeva, king of the vanars (apes), is also of the ape race. The wise Jambavant who advises the vanars (apes) is of the bear race. Jatayu and Kaagbhasundie are of the bird race. Students often ask how these seemingly fantasy-like characters could possibly be real. Kogan would concur that those who need logic to prove the religious claim that the characters are part of Hindu history dismiss the nature

of faith-based religious claims. Although I do not have the logical, epistemological capacity as a human to adequately answer this question, I do provide a framework of how I come to accept the religious claim that the characters of the *Ramayana* are a legitimate part of Hinduism that is beyond comprehension.

It is important to first note that Hindu scriptures are divided into two primary categories known as Shruti[457] and Smriti[458]. The Shruti genre consists of the divine texts that develop from a divine origin. Shrutis are a divine revelation that are heard from the Supreme Being. The *Vedas*, *Puranas*, and *Upanishads* are Shrutis that develop from a direct, divine religious experience with the Supreme Being. For this reason, Shrutis are known as "that which is heard". Because Shrutis are a divine revelation from a Supreme Being, the Shrutis are the religious authorities of Hinduism. However, this does not mean Smritis are irrelevant.

The Smriti genre develops in the era after the composition of the Shrutis. Smritis are known as religious scriptures that convey the essence of the Shrutis in a manner that is more feasible for the human epistemological capacity to comprehend. Religious honorific Hindu saint-poets write the Smritis to help Hindus interpret the Shrutis. These saint-poets convey the ideals of humankind through the human incarnations of a Supreme Being as personified. The Smritis are known as "that which is remembered" because they are based on the bedrock convictions heard through the divine revelation of the Shrutis. The *Ramayana*, *Mahabharat*, and *Bhagavad Gita* are Smritis.

Since the *Ramayana* is a Smriti, it is not a literal text based solely on past historical events of Hinduism that occurred in Treta Yuga,[459] although it also falls under

the genre of itihasa (history). Therefore, it requires a metaphorical interpretation based on the Shrutis.

> "While one of the roles of these *itihasa* is to act as a chronicle of the events, these *itihasa* also had a more encompassing role to play in documenting history. Instead of documenting the events and dates as disjoint records, they were written as a story with great details to also serve as a guidebook for people to learn a lesson or two from history and conduct their present lives suitably – the real role that history is supposed to serve."[460]

The seemingly fantasy-like characters of the *Ramayana* are metaphorical characters that represent particular character traits. For instance, Shri Hanumanji, Sugreeva, and the rest of the vanars (apes) may not literally be apes. Instead, these characters may represent strong but yet humble ape-like qualities. It is also important to note that the word "Hanuman" means "strong jawed man" in Sanskrit. Therefore, "Hanuman" as well as the rest of the ape race might be strong-jawed men. Likewise, Jambavant might not be a bear but rather may be a symbolic representation of intelligence used to tame the strength of a bear. Despite this metaphorical interpretation, Hindus may believe that these characters were real fantasy-like characters due to the nature of maya (illusion).

Yet, if an individual believes in God, then by definition God, the Creator of all creation, has the power to create any form of life. If you believe in God, then you believe anything is possible. If you accept that anything is possible because of God's unquestionable ability to create, then it is feasible that the *Ramayana* occurred as a part of Hindu history with Hanumanji as an apeman, Sugreeva as an apeman, Jambavant as a bear, and so on. It is quite possible that the *Ramayana* occurred thousands of years before it was in the form of a written text. While humans today might not conceive of a

world where apemen walked the earth, it is quite possible that the circumstances of nature thousands of years ago allowed apemen to grow as a viable species. According to Hari,

> "From all these recent research findings, it does seem plausible that during the time period 7000 years ago, people were different in appearance and genetically different from what we are today. This time window could indeed have had people in different transitional stages of evolution, running into each other, since the lesser population was widely spread across the varied geographies of the world."[461]

The people who lived during the time period of the *Ramayana* had a different appearance from humans today due to genetics. People evolved from 7,000 years ago to today, which means that it is not far-fetched to think that the characters of the *Ramayana* are real.

With the legacy of the *Ramayana* in mind, I teach in a messy, pedagogical space of hybridity when I teach about the *Ramayana* during invited class presentations and campus-wide lectures. It is imperative that I negotiate religious and cultural boundaries as I aim to warrant a sacred, educational gaze that acknowledges a de-Orientalized epistemological framework of Hinduism. I do not suggest that students return to reading an original version of the *Ramayana* in higher education. As I mentioned earlier, our epistemological capacity as humans prevents the development of a truly, accurate, historical version of the *Ramayana*. What I am suggesting is that students open up to the possibilities of the religious epistemological framework that the *Ramayana* endorses. I do not wish to impose a Hindu-oriented religious epistemological framework onto students, but rather it is my hope that students will understand how Hinduism influences my epistemology in a legitimate manner.

The *Ramayana*, a saga that is historical in and of itself, influences my religious epistemological framework. I aimed to share my religious epistemological framework as a faith-based Hindu when I presented and danced for undergraduate students in RELG 214 *Classical Texts of Asian Religion* taught by Dr. Lise Vail at Montclair State University in Fall 2011.[462] During the presentation for the 5:30 p.m. class meeting, I discussed the differences between the short book of the *Ramayana*[463] that the class read and the lengthy version of the *Ramayana* read by most Hindus. Throughout the afternoon and evening of the presentation, I felt deeply rooted as a faith-based Hindu to the earth. I enjoyed a mindful, contemplative walk with my peers who respected my religious epistemological framework that prompted me to maintain fidelity to the ethic of Hindu dance.

> "I felt interconnected to Mother Earth as I walked with my friends Sean O'Connor, David Gibson, and Silas Dvergastein, who helped me carry my luggage for the presentation from Dickson Hall to University Hall, buildings separated by a small round, green lawn. It was as if the light wind from the calm sky was gently pushing me as I walked on the earth outdoors from Dickson Hall to University Hall. The gentle breeze seemed to soothingly soak into every pore of my body with a blessing from a Supreme Being. This feeling indicated my purpose to me as a faith-based Hindu, Kuchipudi dancer, and educator. I noticed that the evening moon and the stars lit up the campus. This light peered through the large windows in the classroom in University Hall. I felt that Shri Rama's blessings touched me directly through the evening light that broke through the glass of window. I felt misty-eyed with a calm sensation because I sensed a tranquil, cooling energy run through my entire body from head to toe as I looked up at the sky while outside and through the window in the classroom. This feeling reminded me of my purpose as I had a role to fulfill on earth as a human. This was a profound feeling for me that filled my body with an overwhelming joy that seemed infectious to those around me."[464]

As I danced the traditional Kuchipudi *Ramayana Sabdam*, I felt a sensational burst of jovial warm energy overcome my body as I related the historicity of Shri Rama.

This burst of energy caused me to see how my faith as a Hindu influences how I dance. The students told me that they see how much I believe in the *Ramayana* because of my facial expressions coupled with my body movement during the dance. At one point, in the dance, my eyes became watery because I was happy to share the *Ramayana*. However, I did not wish to force the beliefs of Hinduism onto the students. On the contrary, I wished to share my faith in the *Ramayana* with the students and show how the *Ramayana* provokes a valid, religious epistemological framework.

During the discussion after the dance, it was evident that the students were very focused on the dance movements. I felt that the students connected what they read in the assigned version of the *Ramayana*[465] to the dance. The students asked questions about the *Ramayana* and the dance instead of the form of the dance. Most of the questions aimed to connect my identity as a faith-based Hindu with the text that they read for the course.

Michael Kogan, the earlier mentioned theologian who writes about religious epistemology, was present for this presentation.

> "Dr. Kogan pressed the point of how the dance brings out the faith that I have as a Hindu and thus, brings life to the text of the *Ramayana*. Here, I felt that I was able to share my religious epistemological framework of the *Ramayana* with students in an effort to de-Orientalize the text. Although overall the students did not see how I could believe in talking "apes" and "birds", I felt that they at least respected my identity as a faith-based Hindu who maintains a religious epistemological framework."[466]

The sacred, educational gaze of Michael Kogan caused me to sense that I taught in the pedagogical space of hybridity where cross-cultural pedagogy needed negotiation. On the one hand, I have a deep-rooted faith in Hinduism that pours from my body and fills

the pedagogical space that I dance in. On the other hand, I must maintain an awareness that some might view my faith in Hinduism as delusional because of the long history of colonization that dismissed a faith-based Hindu-oriented religious epistemology. In the pedagogical space of hybridity, I am compelled to reconcile my faith in Hinduism with a long history of colonization. Here, I aim to reframe Hinduism in a manner that causes viewers of the dance to reevaluate the purpose of the Hindu epics. This negotiation causes me to employ the Hindu epics as a philosophical text that has the ability to kindle ethical inquiry. My goal is not to force viewers of the dance to share my beliefs in Hinduism as history but rather to demonstrate how the Hindu epics are useful for ethical thought.

Through the abovementioned presentation, I gained awareness of how my religious epistemology as a Hindu may seem mythological to many. For this reason, I consider it necessary, when I present, to explain how my beliefs develop as a faith-based Hindu. During October 2012, I was invited to present and dance at a campus-wide lecture at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. [467] Drew University is a beautiful campus with a scenic view enhanced by many tall trees. The campus reminds me of a New England scene from an academic storybook. The power lines are all underground and most of the buildings are castle-like. It seems like a campus filled with history that appreciates nature.

> "When I arrived at Crawford Hall in the Ehinger Center at about 6:30 p.m., I created a sacred space for myself using a round table, a vase of flowers, my Shri Rama murti, and my *Ramayana*. *Ram Kahani*, a 25 minute bhajan (song), played while Karen Pechilis, Chair of the Comparative Religion Department and I prepared the setup for the event. The aura in the seemingly sun-colored-orange windowless room coupled with the calmness of the warm evening of the night

> outdoors was profound. Although the evening light did not peer into the windowless room, I still had a sense of the warm evening outdoors. It was as if Shri Rama was there in every niche and cranny of the room and beyond."[468]

During the lecture, I spoke about the *Ramayana* as history and not mythology. I related how, based on science and faith, it is quite possible that the *Ramayana* happened, although my goal was not to prove the *Ramayana* as history. My faith as a Hindu causes me not to require concrete proof. I focused on the philosophical implications of the Golden Deer scene of the *Ramayana*. I provided a synopsis of the *Ramayana* to build the background knowledge of attendees. Before I danced, I explained the meaning of the gestures for the dance drama.

The demon king Ravana forced his uncle Mareech to disguise himself as a golden deer as part of the plan to kidnap Sita Maa who at the time was living in the forest region with Shri Rama and his younger brother Lakshmana. Mareech did not want to engage in this immoral plot. Nevertheless, Ravana told Mareech that he could die at the hands of Shri Rama or Ravana's. Mareech decided that it would be better to die at the hands of God rather than at the hands of a demon like Ravana. For this reason, Mareech disguised himself as a golden deer. Sita Maa, enticed by the beautiful deer, asked Shri Rama to catch the deer for her. Shri Rama instructed his younger brother Lakshmana to protect Sita Maa while Shri Rama went to capture the deer. Mareech yelled "Lakshmana" in Shri Rama's voice in an effort to force Lakshmana to abandon Sita Maa. Lakshmana heard the cry for help but did not willfully choose to abandon Sita Maa. Regretfully, Sita Maa cried as she spoke harsh words to her younger brother-in-law to force him to help Shri Rama. Although Lakshmana knew there was no harm that could come to his elder

brother, he still chose to appease Sita Maa. Before Lakshmana left, he drew a protective circle around the hut of Sita Maa and told her to be sure that she stays within the boundaries of the circle. Ravana came in the disguise of a sadhu (holy person) who begged Sita Maa for food. Ravana would not accept the food unless if Sita Maa crossed the line of the protective circle. When Sita Maa crossed the line of the circle, Ravana assumed his true demonic form and kidnapped the princess, Sita Maa.

As I danced to music set to a PowerPoint, the slides changed automatically to accompany my dance movements. I was happy to know that several attendees were able to read the dance movements. This was evident to me because several attendees asked to take pictures with me after the lecture in particular dance poses. During the question and answer session, which traditionally follows campus-wide lectures, many attendees asked questions regarding the philosophical implications of the scene coupled with my faith as a Hindu. This made me feel that I successfully showed that whether or not individuals view the *Ramayana* as historical, the *Ramayana* is a philosophical saga that promotes critical thought. I felt confident answering the questions, but I also wanted to be careful not to sound evangelizing. I was able to engage in a philosophical discussion regarding key parts of the dance.

While faith-based Hindus do not need proof of the *Ramayana* as history, it is crucial to acknowledge that there is evidence of the *Ramayana* as a historical account. The historical references and consistency of events, astrological times, and geography in India during the time before British rule point to a valid family tree lineage of Shri Rama of the Solar dynasty.[469] Hari states that several generations of the Solar dynasty lived on

after Shri Rama.[470] Orientalists should not ignore the family lineage of Shri Rama. There are no human bodies to exhume from the Solar dynasty because Hindus traditionally believe in cremation. It is more than feasible that the Solar dynasty lived in ancient Ayodhya until the family lineage ended or could no longer be traced. Valmiki refers to specific days and times of events in the *Ramayana* as he gives a historical account of Shri Rama. [471] There are clear astronomical references by scholars such as K.S. Raghavan, P.V. Vartak, P.V. Mendki, Narsing Rao, and N.P. Ramadurai who confirm Valimiki's descriptions.[472]

It is possible to trace the geography of the *Ramayana* since many of the cities exist today. There is a controversy about the location of ancient Ayodhya. Present day Ayodhya may not be the same as ancient Ayodhya. The controversy is about locating a place that is a part of history as opposed to mythology. In the historical account of the *Ramayana*, Valmiki writes about Hanumanji who brought medicinal herbs to Shri Rama to heal His brother who was wounded in battle with Ravana's army. This is quite possible since Dunagiri, a village located in the hills of the Himalayan, has medicinal plants.[473] There are forest tribes in Kishkinda, the birthplace of Hanumanji who was the servant of Shri Rama. These forest tribes refer to themselves as "vanara" and the monkey is their emblem.[474] Hanumanji and the vanaras were from Kishkinda. Present day Sri Lanka[475] is historically viewed as the place where the demon king, Ravana ruled during the *Ramayana*. Hari writes,

> "Sri Lanka of today is considered by both the government as well as locals of Sri Lanka and India, as the Lanka of Ramayana times and just as there are many sites forming a Geographical trail in India of the places connected with the events of Ramayana, Rama and the others of those times, there are at least 50 sites in Sri

> Lanka, which claim to bear a connection with Ravana, his clan, Sita and the events of the Ramayana which unfolded in Lanka."[476]

The geographical trail[477] of the *Ramayana* is a pilgrimage for many faith-based Hindus today who visit the sacred sites.

The most intriguing archaeological evidence of the historical account of the *Ramayana* is a bridge that links ancient India and ancient Lanka. NASA documented satellite images[478] of this bridge, which currently exists under water. Shri Rama needed to cross the ocean from India to Lanka to rescue Sita Maa. The bridge is known as Setu Bandha since it links two lands. Hanumanji and the vanara army built a bridge out of stones for Shri Rama, which is why the bridge is known as Rama Setu. Particularly, the vanaras Nal and Neel placed the stones into the water to create the bridge. For this reason, the bridge is known as Nala Setu. In 1763, William Stevens called the bridge Palk Strait/Bay[479] since he surveyed the bridge for Robert Palk who was a part of Madras Government. Muslims who lived in Sri Lanka during the British rule of India told the British about an Islamic leader named Aadhaam who walked across the bridge to Ceylon where he stood for one thousand years as he engaged in repentance.[480] Muslims seem to view this as a legend and not as history. Nevertheless, Sri Lankan Muslims call the bridge Aadhaam's Bridge. The British who conquered Sri Lanka began to call the bridge Adam's Bridge.[481]

Although some[482] claim the bridge is a natural formation, the evidence points to the bridge as a constructed formation. One geological argument refers to the plausibility of coral on the bridge.

> "Corals usually grow on hard rock and closer to the surface of the sea where they can receive sunlight. In the case of the Rama Setu, what has been found is that,

> beneath the corals, there is loose sand. Thus these set of Corals on the Setu, could not have grown there on their own, but should have been transported from elsewhere and deposited there."[483]

If the bridge was a natural formation, then it is crucial for geologists to explain how this occurred if they wish to dispute the historicity of the construction of the bridge. Valmiki explains the construction of the bridge in the *Ramayana* in detail.[484] To faith-based Hindus, this is adequate proof of the reason why the bridge exists. The full length of the bridge, built about 7,200 years ago according to Hari,[485] is no longer in tact due to a storm similar to a tsunami that occurred in 1480 CE.

Orientalists considered the Hindu epics to be myths because they did not want to acknowledge the possibility of the Hindu epics as history. Orientalists needed to situate Indian history in a certain era to make sense of Indian it in the Western historical framework. For this reason, Indian history is incorrectly placed into the part of history after the Egyptian culture developed.[486] While Orientalists did not deny the existence of the *Ramayana* as a text, they also failed to acknowledge the time period, which the *Ramayana* was written.

> "The European colonial scholars had dated the Valmiki Ramayana text to 300 BCE because they then had to fit all the literature of India and its history, well within 1200 BCE. This date was sacrosanct for the European historians, because they had fixed the time of the Aryan Invasion as 1500 BCE."[487]

Orientalism was used as a tool for the colonization of India. The British misused creativity to develop a fictitious history of India based on their knowledge instead of the knowledge of Indians. In other words, the British aimed to teach Indians about Indians and Indian history, even though the British did not know the religion and culture. The British had an agenda that involved the colonization of India as a British colony. For this

reason, the British had to develop a creative plan to miseducate Indians that would cause self-doubt.

> "To get a control on this situation, it was then strategised by the British, that the best way to rule over the Indians and also curb India's mental and spiritual influence on the Englishmen, would be to demean India's culture, history and knowledge. To this end, the native history books would have to carry such information that would create self doubt amongst Indians, about themselves. This mindset, would help the British overlord over the Indians, better."[488]

In order to maintain control of Indian influence on the British, the British decided to create history books that would re-create Indian history, which would establish British superiority and result in Indian self-doubt. This is evident in several statutes of colonial India such as the *English Education Act of 1835*.[489] Thomas Macaulay's *Minute on Education*[490] stressed the need for a Western education system in British India. With the purpose to teach Indians about Indian history in mind, Orientalists created history texts that reframed Indian history as "mythological". [491] For instance, James Mill wrote the *History of British India*[492] to educate Indians about an Orientalist version of Indian history. This is when the British introduced an imaginary Hinduism that referred to Indian history and Hinduism as mythology.[493]

> "Ironically, against the testimony of *Rama-Katha*, as the colonialism would have it, the Indian texts such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were exiled from the mainstream education system by putting them in the category of religious texts. Consequently, while the Indologists, of the non-English background, raved about them, they were abandoned in India leading to disorientation of young generation from these value-texts, as K.M. Munshi noted in his lectures delivered to I.A.A. recruits in 1960:" … 'The Mission Houses through their little books, told us that those who drew sustenance from these Epics were no better than savages!'[494]

The British used creativity as a tool to misrepresent Hinduism and Indian culture. Creativity was used to manipulate Indians into self-doubt that caused an imaginary Indian history to develop. The goal of the British was not to enhance Hinduism or Indian

culture. On the contrary, the aim was to impose a Western epistemological framework and religious views onto a colonized land.[495] This is precisely the messy, cross-cultural hybrid space that has the ability to transform culture. To this extent, it is crucial to pay attention to issues of creativity that arise because creativity has the ability to manipulate religion and culture in a manner that destroys historicity. Yet, creativity also can engage in a transformation in a de-Orientalized manner that enhances religion and culture in a space of hybridity where something new has the potential to develop.

*From History to Orientalism*

Valmiki's infamous text was written to relate the historicity of the *Ramayana* to the people of his era. While Valmiki's version is still a dominant version of the text among many Hindus, society has transformed since the text was written. Because of this, it is crucial to reframe the *Ramayana* to think about the current implications. This does not mean that scholars should misrepresent Shri Rama. On the contrary, it is imperative for scholars to aim to represent the character of Shri Rama in an attempt to reevaluate the implications of the *Ramayana* for society today. Here is where the issue of creativity arises. The issue is not about finding a "correct" version of the Ramayana as opposed to a false version. My problem does not lie with the creative appropriations of the *Ramayana* that enrich the tradition of Hinduism and Indian culture in a manner that honors the legacy of Shri Rama. My concern is when the *Ramayana* is adopted through a colonialist ideology that Orientalizes Hinduism.

Aside from the British who developed Orientalist texts to colonize Indians, Indians themselves created texts that blurred the lines of history and folklore. For

instance, Valmiki is credited as the original author of the *Ramayana*, yet several other editions of the *Ramayana* exist by several authors. There is a need here to make a distinction between versions of the *Ramayana*. First, there are versions that were translated into languages that the people understood to ensure that the text would not become a forgotten part of Indian history and Hinduism. While Shri Rama is a Hindu prince and an incarnation of a Supreme Being in Hinduism, Shri Rama is not just a part of Hindu history. In fact, several Mughal emperors and Persian emperors acknowledge Shri Rama as a historical figure of Indian history.[496] The Thai kingdom honored the saga of Shri Rama to the point where several kings had a name that included "Rama" and the capital city was once named Ayudhya probably because of respect of the virtue of Shri Rama's historical time in Ayodhya.[497] Thus, the *Ramayana* is much more than a Hindu epic but rather a historical account of Indian history that is sacred to Hindus. Second, there were versions that were rewritten as folklore as a means to educate those who found village folklore fascinating. Third, there were versions that were re-written in a manner that does not align with the actuality of the *Ramayana* as written by Valmiki and thus is not historical.[498] The abovementioned appropriations of the *Ramayana* enrich Hinduism and reject a colonialist ideology.

The words within the text of the *Ramayana* credit the saint-poet Valmiki as the original author. It is more than a text that tells a story but rather it is a historical biography that Valmiki shares to eternalize the historical Shri Rama, an incarnation of a Supreme Being according to Hindus.

> "Valmiki Ramayana is a historical biography because Valmiki, the author of the original Ramayana text was a contemporary of Rama. This has been explicitly

> stated in the text itself. This story was not penned a few hundred years after the life of Rama. In fact, Valmiki was the guardian to the wife and sons of Rama."[499]

Valmiki wrote the epic in Sanskrit because this was the common language among Brahmans, the priestly caste of India at the time. The Brahmans were the educators who were responsible for teaching. For this reason, it was most important for the Brahmans to have access to the *Ramayana* as a text that teaches morality.

Ramkatha, the story of Rama, is reframed in different ways for the purposes of interpreting morality. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that new versions that do not translate Valmiki's text are interpretations of the narrative based on the expression of scholars who did not live during the historical time period of the *Ramayana*.[500] Those outside of the priestly caste usually retell folk retellings with improvisation in villages.[501] These versions blur the lines between the *Ramayana* as historical and fictional because they are not the same as Valmiki's original text. On the contrary, these are retellings that do not align with the actuality of the *Ramayana*. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the purpose of the reframing and retelling of Ramakatha is to educate about morality through interpreting the saga Shri Rama who epitomized duty over emotion. Thus, these appropriations were not meant to harm the tradition with a hidden colonialist agenda, but rather developed to teach society about the ethical dimensions of the *Ramayana*.

The reframing of the *Ramayana* becomes a problem when there is an intention to engage in disrespect to purposefully dishonor the legacy of Shri Rama. Several texts of the twentieth century intentionally insult Hindus who honor Shri Rama.[502] Said would concur that the Anglicists of the 1800s were Orientalists who wanted to colonize Indians into becoming something that Anglicists considered better.

> "From the Saidian perspective, both the Orientalists and the Anglicists of 1800 were Orientalists. Both contributed to the British colonial enterprise and particularly to the justification for colonialism. Both saw India in need of British tutelage in order for the people of that land to become something other than, better than, what they were."[503]

Michael Madhusudan Datta's[504] life provides a clear example of how the British colonized young Indians into developing a frame of mind where Indians themselves came to believe that they were something that they were not. Many Indians passed this on to future generations who then actually did become something they were not in terms of ancestry. Datta did not seem to view colonization in a poor light because he himself was colonized into sharing the goals of the British. On the one hand, the British of the 1800s might view this as a move towards upward social mobility that leads to a more civilized existence. On the other hand, it seems that there is a deep sense of loss of the acknowledgement of traditional ancestry and the family ties that have a deep role in Hinduism. Furthermore, Indians themselves did not believe their very own history of India but rather came to believe the history of India as taught to them by the British.

The British created Hindu College[505] to ensure that students could study the English language so that they would have the capability to understand Western literature. Datta was admitted as student of Hindu College in 1833.[506] Henry Louis Vivian Derozio[507] and Alexander Duff[508] were teachers at Hindu College that had a great influence on Datta among others. Datta became immersed in becoming "civilized" as a part of Western society. He even added "Michael" officially to his name so that he could identify with Western society.[509] Like Datta, many Indians in college thought they were "intellectuals" who moved past the savage life of their ancestors. These so-called

intellectuals rebelled against the orthodox Hindu norms of their parents, religion, culture, and historical traditions. This included eating beef, which is against the beliefs of Hinduism since Hindus honor the cow as the giver of milk and life similar to that of a mother.[510]

> "Throughout the nineteenth century but particularly in the first half of it in the intellectual crucible of Calcutta, Christianity represented not just a religion but also an intellectual, even civilizational, tradition. Christianity stood for European Enlightenment. It stood for Western Civilization."[511]

To some, Christianity was synonymous with Western civilization and the European Enlightenment. In addition, Christianity was not only a newly discovered religion to Indians but also a form of culture. Christianity was used as a civilizing force regardless of whether or not Indians accepted the theology of Christianity. Datta was baptized as a Christian but yet he did not accept Christian theology.

> "Though Dutt was himself a Christian convert, he had clearly less concern for the theological side of Christianity in this essay than with Christianity as a civilizing force."[512]

Here, as a Hindu woman who honors Catholicism and does not wish to offend Catholicism or other sects of Christianity, I must point out that it seems offensive to use Christianity as a mere vehicle of culture without acknowledging the religious force that guides the tradition. It is unfortunate that many missionaries of the time did not care about how Indians viewed Christianity, as long as Indians accepted the tradition regardless of the reason. Overall, Indians accepted the opportunity for social mobility rather than Christ as the savior. On the contrary, many Hindus who remained in fidelity to Hindu traditions did accept Christ as an incarnation of God as man on Earth.[513] For this reason, many Hindus often worship images of Christ. However, these Hindus honor

Christ with a religious intention. In fact, I as a Hindu woman, often attend Catholic mass to honor Christ the Savior and hear the daily mysteries. Regardless, those Hindus who converted to Christianity for the purpose of upward social mobility have the scars of colonization on their ancestry because of their passive nature that did not preserve their own history as Hindus and moreover did not understand the theological aspect of Christianity. The families of these Hindus who converted came to actually believe that they were Christians when in fact this is a residual effect of colonization. In many cases, Hindus do not believe in converting to something that they are not and they do not wish others to convert to Hinduism also. Instead, Hindus accept other religions as long as they are truthful and just and non-Hindus should do the same with Hinduism. Those who have the residual stains of colonization on their ancestry should trace their roots to learn more about the legacy of their ancestors and confront the legacy of colonization in an attempt to search for an identity that remains faithful to tradition but yet moves with time.

Like Datta, Krishna Mohan Banerjee[514] provides another example of a student who was influenced by the British and then became immersed in Christianity as a civilizing force. Unlike Datta, Banerjee embraced the theological nature of Christianity. Banerjee converted to Christianity where he became Reverend Banerjee, and thus, disrupted his Hindu family structure.[515] While I honor the Catholic faith in particular, I do feel the British disrupted the family system of Indian culture. Every Hindu, as a part of a family system, has a role to play in Hinduism based on respect for ancestry and future generations. If Hindus convert to Christianity, then they are unable to perform the rituals of Hinduism that bind the family together, which means these individuals will not

fulfill a sacred ancestral debt.[516] The family system then begins to crumble as Hindus convert Christianity.

Seely refers to Macaulay who stated,

> 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.'[517]

This was a colonizing goal that set out to disrupt religion and culture in India in an attempt to civilize Indians in developing an English taste for thinking. The British taught students both *how* to think as well as *what* to think by imposing a particular ideology on students.[518] The British successfully corrupted youths of Hindu College who became what they were told they should be – "civilized" in the eyes of the British.

> "Hindoo College, in a sense, had preempted Macaulay's minute. It was already producing those persons described by Macaulay. Michael Madhusudan Dutt epitomizes the perfect Macaulayan product, acculturated to English tastes, notably in literature."[519]

The British viewed Datta as a proud product of Hindu College that aimed to civilize Indian students. In Datta's essay, *The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu*,[520] Datta portrays the Anglo-Saxons as strong and empowered and the Hindu as passive and weak. He uses creativity to endorse a colonizing epistemology. Through this lens, Datta translates three plays from Bangla to English. He translates the Sanskrit drama *Ratnavali*,[521] his own play which he calls *Sermista*[522] that he claims is based on part of the *Mahabharata*, and *Nil Darpan*.[523] Datta becomes a member of the Society for the Acquisition of Knowledge.[524] Throughout his career as a Bengali poet, he used a Western lens to speak to Indians about the need to civilize.

Dutt causes Indians to question Indian history when he writes *The Slaying of Meghanada.*[525] This text is viewed as "a riot of incorporations, from Milton, Tasso, Homer, Virgil, and Dante, cross-fertilized with the Hindu epics and much, much more from the Hindu tradition."[526] *The Slaying of Meghanada* is about the scene in the *Ramayana* that particularly focuses on the slaying of Ravana's son, Meghanada. While several Ramkatha literary traditions use a number of vernaculars to educate about the history of Shri Rama, these versions aim to remain faithful to the tradition of Hinduism that honors Valimiki's original text. The *Ramayana* was not seen as a mythological epic that was based on an imaginary history of a fictitious Hinduism.

Contrary to Datta's text, Ramkatha literary traditions of India aimed to honor Shri Rama's legacy. The very term "Katha" is a sacred Hindu term that connotes the sacredness of Shri Rama. I will not use the term "katha" to describe Datta's literary piece. While some might place Datta's work into the genre of Ramkatha, it is my contention that to do so will move the term "katha" from sacred to profane which I, as a Hindu woman who honors Shri Rama, will not do.

My issue is particularly with the way Datta uses creativity as a tool to present Shri Rama as a mere mortal who was a part of a colonial era. I would not have an issue with Datta's text if he used different Indian names as opposed to desecrating the sacred name of Shri Rama. Datta is entitled to share his perspective as a novelist. However, Datta's creativity in his text serves to destroy a Hindu epistemological framework that views Shri Rama as a historical figure. While there is no accurate way to describe Shri Rama, Datta does not even attempt to represent the character traits. Even though I acknowledge that

Datta has his own perspective of Shri Rama, I cannot endorse his insensitivity to Hindus. He misleads his audience as he shows blatant disrespect for Shri Rama as a part of the Hindu tradition and furthermore for his very own Hindu ancestors. Datta uses creativity in the space of hybridity to transform the character of Shri Rama to the point where the character is no longer *Shri Rama*. For this reason, he needed to use different names for the characters of his novel that misrepresents the *Ramayana*.

Despite this, Datta bows to the lotus feet of Valmiki[527] before he begins his fourth canto.[528] Why does he bow to Valimiki when he seems to think of Valmiki as a mythological character of the *Ramayana*? Is Datta mocking the Guru-shishya (teacher-student) Hindu tradition or does Datta genuinely seek the blessings of Valmiki? It does not seem that Datta honors Valimiki as a Guru, which leads me to think that he mocked the sacred Hindu tradition by falsely honoring Valimiki. Datta writes the following in a letter to a friend,

> 'People here grumble that the sympathy of the Poet in Meghanad is with the Rakshasas. And that is the real truth. I despise Rama and his rabble while the idea of Ravan elevates and kindles my imagination; he was a grand fellow.'[529]

Contrary to Seely's claims that Datta has not altered Shri Rama and Ravana's characters,[530] the very subjectivity of Datta in the above quote implies that he as an author altered the characters.

For this reason, several literary critics criticize Datta for this piece. Ashis Nandy points out,

> 'As is well known, Meghnadvadh retells the Ramayana, turning the traditionally sacred figures of Rama and Lakshmana into weak-kneed, passive-aggressive, feminine villains and the demons Ravana and his son Meghnad into majestic, masculine, modern heroes.'[531]

Seely yet defends Datta and says Ashis Nandy's critique is not a valid critique. Perhaps Datta did not explicitly relate Shri Rama as weak and Ravana as heroic but his very subjectivity of how he views Shri Rama and Ravana most certainly points to Nandy's criticism. Datta writes,

> 'I must tell you, my dear fellow, that though, as a jolly Christian youth, I don't care a pin's head for Hinduism, I love the grand mythology of our ancestors. It is full of poetry. A fellow with an inventive head can manufacture the most beautiful things out of it.'[532]

Datta himself states that he does not care for Hinduism, which means that he has no regard for the traditions of his ancestors or Indian history. He considers Hinduism to be mythology due to the influence of Orientalists at Hindu College. Datta has a hidden agenda to further the mission of Hindu College as he persuades Indians to believe in his interpretation of the *Ramayana*.

> "*The Slaying of Meghanada* has much to do with the internalizing of the Western literary canon taught and consumed at Hindoo College in the first half of the nineteenth century. Dutt wrote his poem for his Bangla-speaking audience, but he expected them – the educated among them – to see and appreciate his incorporation within it of a rich sampling from the Western classics."[533]

Datta uses creativity inappropriately to appropriate sacred Hindu scriptures for a Western society. He moves the sacred to secular to the point where there is no sacredness. Without this misuse of creativity in mind, Seely continues to defend Datta against critics such as Nandy.

> "Let us consider for a moment the imagined geography of the *Ramayana's* world. The tale of Rama's wanderings is, after all – despite its appeal throughout the South Asian subcontinent and Southeast Asia – a 'north Indian,' or what could be called 'Aryan-centric,' epic. Today one might even call it an 'Orientalist' epic, in the Saidian sense of that term, for the *Ramayana* clearly makes those imagined characters living to the south into the Other, demonizing some, animalizing

> others. In particular, those living in the imagined southern portion of the subcontinent proper include monkeys as well as bears, animals all. And it is here that Dutt resisted the influence from this *Ramayana*-poet predecessors. His southern warriors become just that, southern and warriors. It is left to the reader to infer a simian nature in them, or not, as he or she so chooses. No such nature is actually denoted."[534]

This is a poor philosophical analysis that misinterprets Hinduism, which causes a misappropriation of a sacred text. There is a false division between North Indians and South Indians - who are all Indians. Shri Rama's legacy does not endorse demons as the Other but on the contrary, acknowledges demons as a part of the interconnectedness of society. Shri Rama aims to destroy demonic qualities in an attempt to restore goodness, even in demons. This concern for the well-being of demons is evident in Shri Rama's bestowal of moksha (liberation) onto the demon king Ravana who acknowledges, albeit in the moment of death, that Shri Rama is an incarnation of a Supreme Being. Many consider the demon-king Ravana lucky since he had the honor of dying at the feet of an incarnation of a Supreme Being. The notion of Other here between the North and the South is a false notion that has a hidden agenda. It seems that Datta creates this distinction to further the nationalistic tensions of Indians in an attempt to ignite a civil war. The implicit goal here seems to be to turn Indians to a "civilized" English culture by creating false divisions where Indians battle against one another.

Aside from Nandy, Rabindranath Tagore also offered a critique about Datta's poor analysis. Tagore believes the work failed since it was not even close to an epic.[535] Rabindranath Tagore criticizes Datta for re-charactizing Rama as weak. While I share the criticisms of Nandy and Tagore, my criticism of Datta's work aligns with Pramatha Chaudari.

> "Pramatha Chaudhuri (1868-1946), editor of one of the most prestigious avant-garde literary magazines of the early decades of the twentieth century and himself a close friend of Tagore, disparaged *Meghanada* for being foreign, too foreign. It was not of the soil, so to speak, and therefore did not smell right – didn't smell at all, oddly enough. 'Since the seeds of thought borne by winds from the Occident cannot take root firmly in our local soil, they either wither away or turn parasitic. It follows, then, that *The Slaying of Meghanada* is the bloom of a parasite. And though, like the orchid, its design is exquisite and its hue glorious, it is utterly devoid of any fragrance.'"[536]

Datta, although born Indian, became foreign to India due to the legacy of colonization. His text, *The Slaying of Meghanada*, lacks historicity and moves the sacred to the secular in a manner that offends the Hindu traditions. It seems that Datta hated his Hindu ancestry as a result of his British education. He became what the British wanted him to become – a so-called "civilized" man of Indian blood and color but of English tastes and morals.

*Moving Back to a De-Orientalized Curriculum*

Religious epistemology is a legitimate epistemological framework that determines how faith-based individuals come to know the world. The legacy of colonization rejected the religious epistemology of Indians and Hindus. Instead, the British endorsed a colonizing curriculum in Indian education that Orientalized Indian history and Hinduism. This is evident today as many in higher education still dismiss the religious epistemological framework of the *Ramayana*. It is imperative to acknowledge the Hindu epics as a valid part of Indian history in an attempt to de-Orientalize the residual effects of the legacy of colonization. Orientalists cannot successfully rewrite the history of the Hindu epics in a manner that will convince faith-based Hindus to succumb to an Orientalized epistemological framework. The voices of faith-based Hindus who maintain

a religious epistemological framework need to be un-silenced and Orientalists need to engage in a de-Orientalization process in an effort to learn about the historicity of India and Hinduism.

In this chapter, Orientalists such as Michael Madhusudana Datta along with several others, used creativity to misappropriate Hinduism. In the upcoming chapter, I will focus my attention on the dangers of creativity. Creativity becomes a serious issue to examine because it has the ability to engage in misappropriation in the pedagogical space of hybridity that furthers Orientalism. At times, I may be guilty of unintentionally using creativity to misappropriate Hinduism. I consider it necessary to acknowledge and point to this, as my goal is to de-Orientalize Hinduism through Hindu dance.

# Chapter 8 Pedagogical Challenge of Creativity

It is an ongoing interest to reconcile Eastern and Western culture because of diasporic movements. Through my self-study, I realize that this is central to the issue of how I engage in the creative process as a Hindu dancer to move past the illusionary boundaries of the East and the West. Creativity is part of a constant transformation process because cultures always develop something as they move past deceptive borderlines. My concern is that creativity has the potential to provoke the Orientalism of Hindu dance in the pedagogical space of hybridity. Here, I am in the perplexing position where I must break past the confined margins of Hindu dance, because of the diasporic nature of culture, while maintaining fidelity to the tradition. There is a call to join the history of Hindu dance in a space of hybridity to further enrich the tradition with the diasporic nature of cultures in mind.

While Said[537] motivates me to employ a de-Orientalized pedagogy to help learners form a representative depiction of the East and the West, Bhabha[538] prompts me to maintain a sensitive awareness of how I engage in the creative process to develop something new in the pedagogical space of hybridity. Furthermore, Bhabha provokes me to acknowledge a form of Indian classical dance that moves past the illusionary boundaries of the East and the West. It is imperative to think about the educational challenge of creativity in the pedagogical space of hybridity. Creativity has the potential to be a tool that may further Orientalism through a colonizing ideology.

Specifically, my issue is when creativity is used as a tool of manipulation that Orientalizes Hinduism and Indian classical Hindu dance. Bhabha claims that hybridity is

an inevitable aspect of culture because pure culture does not exist. Although cultures are hybrid, it is imperative to be sensitive to *how* interreligious and intercultural dance forms develop in the pedagogical space of hybridity. With this concern for hybrid dance forms in mind, I maintain that there is an urgency to uphold an *ethic of hybrid responsibility*. Here, this means that there needs to be an ethic of respect for Hinduism when creative innovations develop. In other words, an ethic of respect helps to foster an ethic of hybrid responsibility that dancers need to employ along with a de-Orientalized knowledge base to inform the creative process. An ethic of hybrid responsibility refers to the manner in which dancers and educators exercise sensitivity to utilize a de-Orientalized knowledge base in the pedagogical space of hybridity to develop something new. Otherwise, the creative inventions will result in a reproduction of Orientalized Western myths about Hinduism under the guise of "interreligious" and "multicultural" awareness.

In this chapter, I will focus on how to engage in the creative process with the application of de-Orientalized knowledge that maintains an ethic of respect that intertwines with an ethic of hybrid responsibility in the pedagogical space of hybridity. I maintain that American dance pioneers, Ruth St. Denis[539] and Ted Shawn[540] in particular, furthered the Orientalism of Hindu dance because they applied Orientalist knowledge in the pedagogical space of hybridity without sensitivity as they produced something new. For this reason, I will relate the importance of a dance Guru[541] as a facilitator for the creative process. I hope to share how my self-study causes me to acknowledge that I unintentionally furthered the Orientalism of Indian classical dance through a creative process when I choreographed a particular dance piece. Yet, I repeatedly return back to

the pedagogical space of hybridity as I attempt to engage in a creative process that applies de-Orientalized knowledge of Hinduism. Overall, in this chapter, I aim to provide a theoretical framework that moves toward a creative process that does not further Orientalism but rather develops something new with sensitivity that upholds an ethic of hybrid responsibility in the pedagogical space of hybridity.

*Creative Process*

The West and the East are illusionary binaries where cultures inevitably intertwine. Bhabha's central concept of hybridity ruptures the paradoxes by not just recalling the past but refiguring the past in a manner that interrupts the present. [542] Illusionary boundaries are displaced because of the diasporic nature of religion and cultures. Bhabha[543] shows that paradoxes such as "home and world" and "private and public" come together because the boundaries are illusionary. The pedagogical space of hybridity ruptures the paradoxes to become infused with something new. This unity that brings together the paradoxes is Bhabha's solution to the dire problem of confinement caused by illusionary boundaries. However, this unity needs to remain sensitive to the problem of Orientalism that has the potential to colonize. If the religious and cultural identity that forms through the germination in the space of hybridity develops with postcolonial realities in mind, then there is a possibility for a new religious and cultural identity to form that takes into account a humanitarian culture.

In the pedagogical space of hybridity, the self-study methodology[544] hopes to appropriate knowledge that is not misrepresentative. There is a need to persist with sensitivity as something new develops in the third space of hybridity. A de-Orientalized

knowledge base helps to provoke sensitivity that appropriates knowledge as something new is constructed. If a de-Orientalized knowledge base is ignored, then there is a great threat that the misappropriation of knowledge will further Orientalism as something new develops.

For Bhabha,[545] newness is always present because cultures are always in contact with one another. We should pay close attention to newness particularly in the pedagogical space of hybridity with sensitivity to cultures in mind. Before creativity is used to transfuse cultures with some sort of newness, it is crucial to engage in de-Orientalized interreligious dialogue and cultural contact to help maximize the efficiency of the creative process.[546] It is necessary to comprehend religion and culture to prevent a hazardous distortion based on Orientalist understandings. In other words, the creative process needs to be mediated by building the prior knowledge of learners in a manner that pursues a de-Orientalized understanding of religion and culture. This is central to a sensitive approach to creativity that does not aim to cause harm to Eastern or Western culture. If the creative process goes unmediated with a de-Orientalized understanding of religion and culture, then a lack of sensitivity has the potential to develop something new that prompts Orientalist and colonialist agendas to flourish. Essentially, Western and Eastern ideals will remain tangled in the space of hybridity unless a de-Orientalized comprehension of religion and culture untangles the knot to provide room for a creative process that is sensitive to unequal power relations.

Once there is an understanding of religion and culture through interreligious dialogue and cultural contact that does not engage in Orientalism, then the creative

process may be employed to develop something new. In the pedagogical space of hybridity, the goal is not to teach about confined Western and Eastern values but rather to sprout something new with sensitivity to the nature of religion and culture that exists in illusionary worlds, where systematized dominative powers engage in misappropriation that provokes exoticism. The newness that develops should sustain an ethic of hybrid responsibility works pragmatically for the East and the West.

De-Orientalized constructed knowledge that shows sensitivity for the West and the East, needs to be implemented in the space of hybridity to develop something new. The newness should help the West and the East move past the illusionary paradoxes with a sense of how the West and the East are interconnected and co-dependent. If sensitivity is not present in de-Orientalization, then the growth of an Orientalist ideology has the potential to flourish in the space of hybridity due to a lack of an ethic of hybrid responsibility. This may cause Orientalism to thrive through a deconstruction of de-Orientalized knowledge, which in turn promotes Orientalist agendas. For this reason, it is imperative to proceed with caution in the pedagogical space of hybridity because the newness that forms has the capacity to transform the West and the East.

My hybrid pedagogy looks different at various times as I teach. This messy space has several dynamics present that influence how something new develops. Overall, there is a focus on the self in relation to another with a sense of purpose in mind. Each individual's life has a purpose that is interconnected with humanity. What I am saying is that our personal ethics, which may develop based on religion, constantly impacts one another because we are all interconnected as we live together on the earth. There may or

may not be a universal truth that will cause each individual to identify in the same position. Yet, I believe that there can be reconciliation between each individual's personal ethics and purpose in the world in relation to others. Hybrid pedagogy provides an avenue to think deeply about our place in the world as a part of humanity. As I mentioned above, it is crucial to first develop a de-Orientalized framework through dialogue in this hybrid space. As a part of my hybrid pedagogy, I engage in dialogue with people in this space. After, I hope to present an activity that brings everyone together harmoniously.

For instance, during Montclair State University's *Religions of the World Day*,[547] I engaged in hybrid pedagogy with high school students as I led a discussion to build a de-Orientalized framework of Hinduism. It is important to mention that the students and I sat in a circle on chairs during the discussion. The session offered an introduction of the contemplative practices of Hinduism. Before the session officially began, I played a meditative instrumental[548] to fill the hybrid space with a contemplative aura. To begin the presentation, I shared how I engage in contemplative practices as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, as I focused on my interconnectedness to the environment. Following this, the group and I discussed how contemplative practices, across religions and secularism, benefit the environment and our world at large. We philosophized about how individuals may develop their own contemplative practices to foster an improved relationship between the self and the environment.

After the discussion, I engaged the students in a pulse activity[549] where we shared more of ourselves in a hybrid space through mindful speaking.[550] During this activity,

students and I stood in a circle with our right hand over our left hand. Our right hand and left hand held hands with the person next to us. I told the students that they did not have to participate in hand holding if it felt uncomfortable to them. All of the students willingly moved forward with the pulse activity. We held hands as we each willingly contributed in this hybrid safe. Then, I led a pulse where I used my right hand to squeeze the hand of the person next to me while leading the students with mindful breathing[551] in a silent space. The person next to me continued this process until the pulse came back to me. While holding hands with each other, we lifted our arms up and slowly turned around as we departed from the hybrid space. One high school teacher approached me afterwards to ask where I learned this activity because he said it was profound. In fact, he told me that he plans to use this activity as a part of his pedagogy.

I hope to use creativity in the pedagogical space of hybridity to construct something new that enriches Western and Eastern culture. This *newness* that develops will have different characteristics depending upon the makeup of the hybrid space. In the abovementioned example, the *newness* that emerged for the students and the group focused on contemplative practices of the self in relation to others. We also explored terminology in a manner that helped us to think about these terms with *newness* in mind. Through the discussion, the group reached a consensus that the earth and the environment are synonyms for our purposes of thinking about contemplative practices. Terminology is an important aspect of a hybrid space that seeks to clarify the way we use words to express our intentions in relation to our purpose in an interconnected world.

Aside from the theoretical developments in the space of hybridity, I hope to create a new genre of Indian classical dance that maintains fidelity to the ethic of Hindu dance but also moves along with the diasporic nature of culture. This is necessary for several pedagogical reasons. First, there is a political need to address power inequalities in a manner that retains the agency of Indian classical dance traditions. Second, I wish to help students of non-Eastern traditions approach Indian classical dance with sensitivity. Third, it is imperative to remain sensitive to the context of schooling within the United States.

For example, I engaged in the creative process through hybrid pedagogy when I taught Indian classical dance for an after school Enrichment Program at Bradford Elementary School in Montclair, New Jersey during Fall 2012.[552] Since I mentioned the background of the program in an earlier chapter, I will not focus on that here. Instead, I aim to show specifically how I engaged in the creative process as I maintained an ethic of hybrid responsibility during the time I taught dance. Before I could engage in the creative process, I had to remind myself of the ethic of Hindu dance.[553] I also had to maintain knowledge of the state and federal statutes regarding the separation of church and state in public schools since Bradford Elementary School is a public school of the Montclair School District of New Jersey.

> "I struggled because I could not teach Indian classical dance without thinking about the ethic of Hindu dance because Indian classical dance develops from Hindu dance. I also could not impose a Hindu ethic of dance onto public education students who were furthermore non-Hindu."[554]

In the third space of hybridity, I had to use a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hindu dance and knowledge of the state and federal statutes to develop something new

with an ethic of hybrid responsibility in mind. To accomplish this curriculum-oriented task, I thought about the philosophy of Hindu dance with the students. For example, *Namaskaram*[555] is a sacred part of Hindu dance that the dancer engages in before dancing. One key purpose of *Namaskaram* is to be cognizant of the earth that the dancer tramples on while dancing. Hindu dancers also need to be mindful of the Cosmic Forces all around the dancer. In addition, the dancer requests the teacher's blessings and the audience's well wishes to move forward with the educational process.

The students and I discussed the elements of a *Namaskaram* as we sat on the floor in a circle in a music classroom. We talked about why we should be mindful to the earth since the class agreed that it is vital to care for the earth that we live on. As the discussion continued, we deliberated about personal views of religion. Each student shared whether they are a faith-based religious practitioner, an agnostic, or an atheist. The bright students in this class used these terms during our discussion. The students came to a consensus that there is a Cosmic Force that maintains the universe. From that point, we considered the relationship between teachers and students from a Western and Eastern perspective. This dialogue helped us to think about how to develop a unique *Namaskaram* that honors the world with an ethic of hybrid responsibility to each other in mind.

Essentially, I taught students about a traditional, Hindu *Namaskaram* but did not ask students to participate in this before each class session. The students did agree to engage in a type of *Namaskaram*, which we developed. We agreed on four main components for the choreography. First, we agreed to honor the Sky. I use a capital "S"

here because the Sky represented God for many of these students. The religious students expressed that they believe Sky is a synonym for God in this context because they believe in God. Other students who do not believe in God may just believe there is a need to honor the nature around us that sustains the earth. Second, we wished to pay our respects to our teachers who help us learn. Third, we acknowledge the sacredness of each other as interconnected beings. Fourth, we honor the earth that we live on. These are essentially the four main elements in the abovementioned traditional Hindu *Namaskaram*. However, the intent of each student who engaged in this choreography is based on their own religious and cultural position rather than the identity of a traditional Hindu dancer. Thus, this type of *Namaskaram* was not Hindu but rather was a part of a contemplative, spiritual kind of dance form that, I believe, was appropriate based on federal and state statutes for the public school system.

Although I know there were flaws with my pedagogy, it comforts me to know that I treaded with an ethic of hybrid responsibility as I engaged in the creative process to develop something new with the diasporic nature of culture in mind. I am a faith-based Hindu dancer who recognizes the urgency of moving past the illusionary boundaries of religion and culture to form a unified humanitarian heritage that acknowledges interconnectedness across humanity. Yet, there is a need to remain sensitive to postcolonial realities that cause religions and cultures to be misrepresented. Unfortunately, American dance pioneers did not pay attention to postcolonial issues when they engaged in a creative process that was unmediated by a de-Orientalized pedagogy.

*Creativity of American Dance Pioneers*

During the early 1900s, American dance pioneers used creativity in the space of hybridity to blend Eastern and Western dance forms. Particularly, Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968) and Ted Shawn (1891-1972) were American dance pioneers who formed the Denishawn Compay.[556] They traveled to India where they learned the basics of Indian classical Hindu dance. With a very basic education of Indian classical Hindu dance, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn developed a very unique creative dance style that Orientalized Indian classical Hindu dance as they blended elements of the East with elements of the West in an irresponsible manner.

My issue here deals with a de-Orientalized process of education. St. Denis and Ted Shawn did not study under a traditional, Hindu Dance Guru. Due to this oversight, St. Denis and Ted Shawn did not learn about the sacredness of the Hindu ethic of dance or the Hindu language of dance. Instead, they studied an *imagined* Hinduism through Western authors.

> "Ruthie had heard of the mythical maiden Radha in Edmund Russell's readings from *The Light of Asia*. She learned more about her in a series of books she owned, *Great Religions of the World*. In one volume of that series she found a suitable theme for her heroine to dance in A.C. Lyall's essay on Brahmanism. As Lyall wrote, 'If a Hindoo be asked what is the object and ultimate good that he is striving to reach through religious rites, he will answer 'Liberation.' He must free his soul, the divine particle, from the bondage of the senses.' Guided by this dramatic idea, Ruthie set about the creation of her temple dance."[557]

St. Denis, in particular, studied about the great Hindu female Radha through Orientalized sources. For this reason, she believed Radha is a mythical maiden as opposed to a historical female of Hinduism. St. Denis also learned that 'Liberation' is the most important concept for Hindus. However, St. Denis does not understand moksha

(liberation) or the Hindu's method for attaining moksha. St. Denis uses the creative process to develop a mythological dance drama about a historical Hindu female Radha. She also develops a misguided representation of the sacred Hindu concept of moksha, which then she uses as a theme in her theatrical performance. Nevertheless, St. Denis did encounter traditional, respected Hindus.

> "Americans of St. Denis's generation encountered Vedanta indirectly through the writings of European philosophers such as Schopenhauer or the America Transcendentalists, particularly Ralph Waldo Emerson, who studied the Bhagavad-Gita and the Upanishads in translation and adapted the Vedic concept of a universal spirit to this own definition of an Oversoul. A more direct introduction of Vedanta to the Western world came through a landmark event, the World Parliament of Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. One of the delegates to that convocation was an Indian swami, Vivekananda, whose flowing robes and yellow turban and clear exposition of Vedanta made him the popular favorite of the parliament."[558]

While St. Denis studied Vedanta through Western scholars, there was an opportunity for St. Denis to listen to Swami Vivekananda speak at the World Parliament of Religions. Even though Swami Vivekananda is a respected scholar of the Vedas, he was not a Guru of Hindu dance. If St. Denis had a desire to gain knowledge of Hindu dance, she needed to study under a revered Guru of dance. Nevertheless, St Denis pursued the study of Vedanta on her own with limited guidance from respected Gurus.

> "In 1908 in the company of Constance Smedley, she traveled from London to Surrey to meet Swami Paramananda, a disciple of Vivekananda and a member of the Ramakrishna Order….Swami Paramananda was Ruth's initiator, the first authentic teacher of Vedanta she had encountered, though she had come across ' a number of fake Yogi, trading on women's leisure and curiosity.' Her meeting with the Swami marked the 'beginning of a liberal and spiritual education'."[559]

Based on St. Denis's limited encounters with respectable Hindu Gurus, she developed an Orientalized dance style. St. Denis and non-traditional Indian dancers

performed a newly developed creative dance style with Oriental themes in India. This is very problematic because St. Denis irresponsibly creates an Orientalized dance style which she then teaches to Indians who were not dance students of dance Gurus. Once again, there is the issue of creativity in the educational process. Indians should not have expected a Westerner, who did not study Hinduism deeply or Hindu dance, to teach them about Hinduism through dance. I do not claim that all Indians have knowledge of Hindu dance or that all non-Indians lack knowledge of Hindu dance. My point is that if anyone, Indian or non-Indian, wishes to learn Hindu dance, then there is an appropriate educational process to follow as prescribed by the Hindu ethic of dance. The *Natya Shastra*[560] states that anyone who studies Hindu dance should learn from a respected, Hindu Guru of dance who is well versed in Hindu theoretical texts.

While St. Denis's creative insight is valuable, her creativity provocatizes Hinduism and Indian culture, which adds to Orientalist interpretations because St. Denis uses creativity to portray an *imaginary mythological* interpretation of Hinduism and Indian culture. Hindus would concur that Hinduism is not an imaginary, make-believe religion. Just as Catholics believe in Catholicism, Muslims in Islam, Jews in Judaism, and so forth, Hindus believe in Hinduism. Thus, the beliefs of Hindus should not be dismissed as mere mythology. Rather, scholars should attempt to understand the true nature of Hinduism from Hindu scriptures as opposed to Orientalized, mythological interpretations. In the following quote, it is evident that St. Denis had a desire to integrate the mind-body connection of Hinduism in her creative dance style. This is very

admirable but becomes problematic when Hindu themes are used in an Orientalized manner.

> "Ruth's initial interest in the dances of India had to do with her desire to combine the spiritual with the theatrical, and to do so she felt her dance must be grounded in 'high ideas' of philosophy, art, and religion, characteristics Ruth felt were abundant in Hindu culture. Between 1905 and 1906 Ruth created three important works for herself based on Hindu themes; the original work *Radha*, and then *Incense*, and the *Cobras*."[561]

My issue does not lie with St. Denis's creative style, but rather is with the Orientalized usage of Hinduism as her main theme. St. Denis caused Orientalism to flourish because her creative interpretations did not employ a de-Orientalized knowledge base. For example, St. Denis played the Hindu female Radha in her original work *Radha*. Radha is a divine female in Hinduism who is a consort of the Supreme Being in the incarnation of Shri Krishna. St. Denis wore Indian garb as she played the role of Radha in the ballet. A picture of Ruth St. Denis on the cover of *Moving History Dancing Cultures* depicts Ruth St. Denis in a Western dance pose as the divine Radha. This pose is exoticly vulgar among traditional Indian classical dance scholars because the pose flexes the body in a manner in which the exoticism is clearly explicit. It is a false representation of Radha as a divine being of Hinduism.

St. Denis's blended dance styles of the East and the West does not adhere to how traditional Hindus would portray the divine Radha. The choreography of St. Denis confuses Middle Eastern belly dance and traditional Indian classical dance. St. Denis composes an intriguing choreography,[562] which is very creative, but it is not Indian classical Hindu dance. On the contrary, it should be acknowledged as a fusion of an Eastern dance style and a Western dance style that is a new type of dance style developed

with creativity in the space of hybridity. On the one hand, St. Denis was a dance pioneer who thrived on intercultural relations. On the other hand, she irresponsibly disregarded the sacredness of Hindu dance as she wore the sacred Hindu dance bells without acknowledging the ritualistic, sacred dance traditions of Hinduism even though Hinduism is a common theme across her Oriental dances. In this sense, she engages in Hinduism as a form of culture and not as a religious way of life for the dancer. While she advocated for spirituality in dance, she did not focus on the religious nature of Hinduism as part of the dance.

For instance, Ruth St. Denis did not engage in sacred Hindu contemplative practices that occur before the dancer dances on stage. Indian classical dance ballets traditionally begin behind the curtains as the dancer performs puja on stage.

> "This adoration of the deities of the stage is on par with a Yajna (holy sacrifice). No one shall produce a play without the worship of the stage. These deities worship others when they themselves are worshipped. When they are honoured [sic], they bestow honour [sic] to others. Hence one shall assiduously perform the rite of the adoration of the (deities of the) stage."[563]

Bharatamuni relates the importance of worship before the dance performance. Please note that Hindu scriptures state Hinduism is a monist religion that believes there is One Supreme Being.[564] However, from the One, the many emerge for different purposes. Nevertheless, the many is still a part of the One. The dancer prays for protection during the performance and also prays to unite with a Supreme Being through the performance. Moreover, the dancer hopes to serve Hinduism by relating the great epics of Hinduism with the intention of philosophizing about moral duty.

Ruth St. Denis used incense and sacred Hindu religious objects as props instead of for worship. This is quite offensive to Hindus who maintain respect for sacred religious objects. Nevertheless, a majority of Indians did not confuse St. Denis's creative dance style with traditional, religious Hindu classical dance traditions such as Bharatnatyam or Kuchipudi. Rather, most Indians seem to appreciate the creative attempts of the West to understand the nature of the religion and culture of India.

> "Dances with oriental themes were initially performed in India by Europeans or Europe-based Indian classical dancers, including the Denishawn Company on their 1926-27 tour, and a few years later by Uday Shankar, returning to India after ten years in Europe. These oriental dances were never mistaken by Indians for their own dance forms; rather they were appreciated attempts by artistes to stage dance with Indian themes and costumes."[565]

Perhaps, St. Denis could have created new imaginative characters to blend the dance styles of the East and the West with sensitivity to Hindus and Indian culture in mind. It is important to care about a misrepresentation of Hinduism and Indian culture because it provides false knowledge, thus adding to the dangers of Orientalism. In fact, it brings a whole new problem to the field of Orientalism. That problem is this notion of Oriental dance. Oriental dance, in this sense, does not show respect for the traditions of Hinduism. St. Denis secularized Hindu religious practices and thus, caused Orientalism to flourish in a profane manner. This becomes offensive to traditional Hindu dancers. Just as those who are not baptized should not participate in the Eucharist part of Catholic services or those who are not Jewish need to be cautious of practicing sacred Jewish traditions such as wearing a tallit (Jewish prayer shawl), those who do not adhere to the religious aspect of Hinduism should not claim to be Hindu dancers. It is unfortunate that

creativity can show disrespect for religion if it does not employ a de-Orientalized pedagogical stance.

St. Denis was not the only dancer who furthered the Orientalism of Indian classical Hindu dance through a creative process. Uday Shankar[566] (1900-1977) also employed Western techniques to choreograph Indian classical dance in an effort to develop a more modern choreography. He studied dances of the East and the West as he creatively developed his own unique style that embraced Western myths about the East. Because he was Indian, he had a greater chance than Ruth St. Denis to convince the West that the religion and culture of India was as the West perceived it.

> "He studied a great deal in the libraries, museums and dance-studios of Paris…keeping himself alive by dancing in cabarets to the music of a piano, and gradually evolved a style of his own which exactly suited his physique and temperament and corresponded to the Western myth about the East even more accurately than the productions of Ruth St. Denis. Many different elements went to the making of this style – Bengali folk-dances, the dances of Ruth St. Denis, the Oriental ballets of Pavlova, a few simple mudras, poses from classical Indian paintings and sculpture, Santiniketan Manipuri, Yoga, European styles of the free dance, and a few movements from the classical styles of various countries of South-East Asia."[567]

Shankar's method of learning dance was very non-traditional. Despite the maintained ritualistic tradition of learning from respected Gurus among Indian classical dancers, Shankar did not use this method. Instead, he had semi-classical Indian dance training and European training that did not adhere to the Hindu ethic of dance. He used his knowledge of Hinduism and Indian culture to blend the styles of the East and the West as he developed a creative style of dance to suit his needs.

My issue does not lie with Shankar's creative dance style. His dance style's unique blend of Western and Eastern dance forms served modern entertainment and

social purposes. However, Shankar's dance style added to mythological, Orientalized interpretations of Hinduism as he performed for the West as the West imagined an Indian dance performance would be. Shankar's creative dance style intrigued European audiences, but misrepresented Hinduism and Indian culture. Shankar was an Easterner who should not have simply attempted to conform to Western ideals.

There is a need to develop a de-Orientalized knowledge base while using creativity to develop something new in the space of hybridity to maximize the efficiency of the creative process that aims to remain representative of tradition. Shankar was insensitive to how interreligious and intercultural dance forms develop in the pedagogical space of hybridity. With the lack of an ethic of hybrid responsibility, Shankar disrespects Hinduism as he develops creative hybrid dance pieces. His creative inventions result in a breeding of Orientalized Western myths about Hinduism under the cloak of "interreligious" and "multicultural" awareness.

I do not claim that Hindu dance must remain static and un-changing. What I do claim is that regardless of whether Hindu dance is situated in ancient times or contemporary times, there is a need to stay faithful to the Hindu ethic of dance if choreographing Hindu dance. Otherwise, Hindu dance moves away from Hinduism and transforms into something new that is no longer Hindu. As Said's political analysis implies,[568] this will result in an obliteration of Hinduism that further universalizes Western ideals through the perpetuation of Eastern stereotypes. If dancers do not respect the ethical base of Hindu dance, then the choreography is no longer Hindu. Furthermore, the dance piece is essentially not a hybrid interaction of traditions but rather represents a

radical break with Hindu tradition that propagates Western Orientalism. While there is a need in the pedagogical space of hybridity to move cross the illusionary boundaries of diasporic cultures, there is also a need to adhere to the Hindu ethic of dance to prevent the extinction of a sacred tradition that has the capability to adopt to the un-static nature of cultures.

At first, this pedagogical space might look very messy because of the possible tension between individuals who are unaware of each other's identity, religion, and culture. This messiness slowly begins to transform through hybrid pedagogy as everyone comes together to develop a de-Orientalized epistemological framework and share a part of personal identity. With the identity of individuals coupled with a de-Orientalized epistemological framework in mind, there is a call for negotiation in this space. Individuals rethink how to remain in fidelity to tradition, based on identity, while also sharing but not imposing tradition onto others. The space becomes a harmonious unsoiled area that develops inter-religious and intercultural relations. Yet, this is paradoxical because this peaceful neat space is constantly re-entering a messy place because of the need to always rethink religion and culture that does not remain at a standstill.

The legacy of Orientalism still is a prime concern because it exists in contemporary forms of multicultural dance education. Richardson and Villenas position multicultural education "within the Eurocentric regimes of truth – democracy, pluralism, and equality".[569] They metaphorically point to a dance "with, within, and against whiteness"[570] in multicultural education. This metaphor is part of the messiness of the

pedagogical space of hybridity where something new develops. Richardson and Villenas acknowledge how colonialism is cloaked in Eurocentric ideologies further masked with education to advance "whiteness". Here, multicultural dance education does not work to blend cultures together, but rather serves to educate for a Eurocentric population that aims to have knowledge, regardless of whether Orientalized or de-Orientalized, about the world because this creates a sense of power that advances supremacy.

To unmask this Orientalized paradigm, it is crucial to make a distinction between the guise of multiculturalism and a hybrid interculturalism. While the term "multiculturalism" acknowledges the separate, multiple world cultures, the term "interculturalism" admits the inevitable hybridity that interconnects world cultures.[571] What I am suggesting is that multicultural educators acknowledge that they are intercultural educators who must uphold an ethic of hybrid responsibility in a pedagogical space of hybridity with a de-Orientalized pedagogy that maintains sensitivity to religion and culture. If multicultural educators solely teach in a compartmentalized manner that only acknowledges the existence of a multitude of religion and culture, then these educators ignore the hybridity of the diasporic nature of culture. Consequently, Orientalism has the potential to thrive as educators endorse the separation of religion and culture, which may lead to superiority and inferiority conceptions in inescapable hybrid spaces. To prevent the misappropriation of creative hybrid dance forms in the pedagogical space of hybridity, the Guru has a crucial role to play in the educational journey of Hindu dancers.

*The Role of A Dance Guru*

Guru[572] is a Sanskrit term used to describe a teacher who removes the ignorance of the mind to prepare the student to develop knowledge that will lead to moksha (liberation) upon death. Karen Pechilis writes,

> "*Guru* is a relational, third-person term; it is a title by which one person acknowledges the wisdom of another. Within this general framework, there are two prominent ways of understanding the guru. As the term *guru* suggests, the guru is 'weighty' – one who is invested with the capacity to give philosophical instruction to others, which leads to their salvation. In this more formal sense of the term, the guru is the path. On the popular level, the term *guru* is understood to denote one who is a 'dispeller of darkness'; this sense of *guru* involves someone pointing out the way."[573]

As a faith-based Hindu, I have a spiritual Guru, Pt. Maheshwar Tiwari, who my family and I view as my life long teacher. My family and I performed puja together in our home, which at the time was in Woodbridge, New Jersey with my Guru as the officiating pandit (priest).

My family and I perform puja with my Guruji (on the left) as the officiating Pandit. Seated from left to right are my Guruji, "dad", mom, my brother, myself, and Guruji's brother.

When it was time for my Guru to accept me as a student, my family left the sacred space. A white cotton sheet covered my Guru and I as we both respectively sat in lotus-like positions. My Guru's first instructions to me were to remember my sacred Guru mantra

(prayer) at all times, even upon death. My Guru told me that the sacred mantra is a bond between us, and a Supreme Being, that no one else should know of. To this day, I have not told anyone my sacred Guru mantra. Only my Guru and I know the mantra that binds us spiritually together. Afterwards, my Guru began to fulfill his role as my lifelong educator.

My Guruji accepts me as a lifelong student.

My Guru told me that I must accept my dance "teacher"[574] as my Guru of dance because she is not just a "dance teacher". Instead, she is a well-versed scholar of Hindu scriptures who aims to help me attain moksha (liberation) upon death, through the avenue of Hindu dance. For this reason, I honor my dance Guru with a sincere respect for her soul as an embodied being that will guide me through dance on my journey to moksha upon death. Most ancient Hindu literature points to respected male Gurus explicitly, but also point to female Gurus implicitly. "Gurumata" is a term used to describe the wife of

a Guru who often influences the Guru albeit a "Gurumata" does not provide philosophical instruction to students.[575] However, there were several female "Gurus" and not just "Gurumatas" in India. Pechilis edited a volume entitled *The Grace Guru*, which discusses the historicity of female Gurus in India and the United States. Pechilis makes a note of common themes across the study of female Gurus.

> "In the ideal category of the guru, the female gurus have the following major characteristics in common with each other, and with male gurus. First, they are understood to experience and embody the real, and are thus understood to be divine or perfectly spiritually self-realized; second, the message of the guru is the divinity of the inner self, and the necessity of her or his devotees' own self-realization, to which the guru guides the devotee; third, the guru is an ascetic, and is thus assumed to be pure in body and in spirit, especially in the sense of purity of motive through lack of self-interest."[576]

My Guruji, Pt. Mahesh honors the sacred traditions of Hinduism, but also acknowledges the need for me to accept my dance "teacher" as my dance "Guru". My dance Guru helps me to find the divinity within myself to help me experience Hindu dance in a manner that causes me to connect to a Supreme Being, which has the potential to lead me to moksha upon death. Before I started my Kuchipudi dance education with my dance Guru, Smt. Sadhana Paranji, I had to accept my dance Guru as my life-long dance educator. Students of Indian classical dance learn from a respected Guru who also learned from a Guru.[577] My dance Guru and I prayed together before we engaged in the teaching and learning process. We prayed for a Supreme Being to guide us through our journey of dance together as we hope dance will lead us to moksha (liberation) upon death. For this reason, even though there are many well-versed scholars of dance whom I may learn from, I will not turn away from my dance Guru. We have a life-long bond between us as Guru (teacher) and shishya (student). In fact, the bond runs deep as my

Guru's Gurus are in turn my Gurus. My Guru's Gurus have taught my dance Guru who in turn teaches me. Thus, I have many dance Gurus through my dance Guru. The Guru learns and teaches the dance language, dance theory, tools to choreograph, and all the other elements of the dance tradition. The Guru helps the students learn to use creative skills to choreograph classical dance routines based on religious and cultural traditions.

My dance Guru blesses me eternally.

In the elementary stages of Indian classical dance, the dance Guru explains the language of dance to the students by teaching the students how to develop the strategies needed to communicate the language of dance. Indian classical dance has a language of hand gestures, neck gestures, eye gestures, head gestures, and feet gestures.[578] The hand gestures are the letters, the movements of the body are the words, and the dance is the

language. Students at this point are beginning to learn to communicate the language of dance by listening to the stories and conveying those stories as their teacher choreographs routines. While the dance Guru uses creativity to choreograph, the dance Guru cannot teach students to express themselves with emotional sentiments.[579] Thus, students need to use their creative nature to display the emotions that accompany the dance choreography that is composed using the dance vocabulary. In the intermediate stages of dance, students begin to develop the skills needed to develop their own choreography to communicate. This is where students have the opportunity to allow their creativity to help them compose expressive dances using a dance vocabulary. The audience then has an opportunity to learn to read the language of the dance. After exposure to the dance language, the audience will eventually develop a keen eye that will become familiar with the language of the dance.

My dance Guru guides me to use the Indian dance language through the creative process with the Hindu ethic of dance in mind. As I engage in the creative process, I often share my concerns and questions with my dance Guru. For instance, I once was interested in choreographing a dance piece to a song entitled *Vinayaka*.[580] This was a religious Indian classical dance song about Shri Ganesha,[581] remover of obstacles. However, this was not a traditional Kuchipudi dance song but rather was a Kathak dance piece. Kuchipudi[582] music is predominantly from South India while Kathak[583] is well-known in North India. Although Kuchipudi and Kathak are dance traditions that stem from Hinduism, each respective dance style has many technical differences. For this

reason, my dance Guru cautioned me as I choreographed a Kuchpudi dance to a Kathak dance song.

My dance Guru reminded me that I must remain in fidelity to the Hindu ethic of dance as I choreograph dances. My dance Guru was not pleased that I applied a Kuchipudi choreography to a Kathak song. The choreography was a fusion of Indian classical dance styles as opposed to a traditional Kuchipudi dance item. For this reason, my dance Guru did not approve of the dance piece as a traditional Indian classical dance item, but rather claimed that it was a fusion. At that point, I realized that if I claim the dance piece as a traditional Kuchipudi item, then I further Orientalism within the tradition. My dance Guru helped to facilitate my creative process to prevent me from engaging in Orientalism of Hindu dance. When I dance *Vinayaka*, I do not claim that it is a Kuchpudi dance but rather I claim that it is a fusion of Indian classical dance styles because it does not develop from one particular genre of Indian classical dance.

At some points in time, I am unable to meet with my dance Guru due to geographical distance and scheduling conflicts. In India, shishyas (dance students) would often become an integral part of their dance Guru's family life and in some cases even assume the dance Guru's last name.[584] However, this cultural aspect of religious Hindu dance was lost due to the dispersion of cultures. While cultural practices transform during migration as Bhabha's analysis shows,[585] the ethic of dance according to the *Natya Shastra*[586] remains preserved for faith-based Hindu dancers.

I struggle to uphold the ethic of Hindu dance in a space of hybridity that cannot ignore the displacement of cultures. During a presentation for the Society for the Study

of Indian Philosophy and Religion group session at the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association,[587] I realized that my intention helps me to reconcile hybridity. The question and answer session part of my presentation became a discussion that focused on my intention as I engage in hybrid pedagogy. Through the discussion, I understood that my intention, in the grey area of hybridity, causes me to move forward as I dance. I refer to this as a grey area because I can never be sure of what the "right" way to proceed is. When I pray in solitude before I enter the pedagogical space of hybridity, I ask the Supreme Being to use my body as a vessel to guide me as I engage in this space. Specifically, I pray for the appropriate words to emerge from my mouth and the suitable gestures to flow from my body while I am in this pedagogical space. After I leave the pedagogical space of hybridity, I thank the Supreme Being for guiding me in the space and also I ask the Supreme Being to forgive me for any unintentional inappropriate actions that I might have engaged in as I employed hybrid pedagogy.

I must remember that my dance Guru placed her faith in me when she bestowed me with the title of *Natya Tilakam* during my *Rangapravesam* (Kuchipudi Hindu dance graduation).[588] "Natya" refers to the drama of the theatre whereas "Tilakam" refers to the metaphorical third spiritual eye of Hindus. I believe my dance Guru trusts that I will use my inner spiritual eye to guide me as I engage in Hindu dance, which I share when I engage in the dance drama. Nevertheless, the geographical distance from my dance Guru creates a space between the tradition and myself. I often do not have the opportunity to immediately confer with my dance Guru when I choreograph a dance. This imposed distance forces me to use my metaphorical third spiritual eye to guide me to develop

creative choreography that remains faithful to the ethic of Hindu dance. On the one hand, this causes me to experience a sense of discomfort because my dance Guru is not present to guide me to maintain an ethic of Hindu dance. On the other hand, this forces me to engage in an ethic of hybrid responsibility, as a dance Guru would, to develop new hybrid dance forms.

This tension between the issue of creativity and my struggle to maintain an ethic of hybrid responsibility in the pedagogical space of hybridity is a large part of my cultural identity. Overall, this tension helps prepare me to eventually serve as a dance Guru if I have a worthy student, either Hindu or non-Hindu, who approaches me with a request to learn and a commitment to the ethic of Hindu dance. As my spiritual being develops to become a potential dance Guru, I must engage in a constant self-study of how I employ the creative process to ensure that I adhere to the ethic of Hindu dance but also adopt to the diasporic nature of cultures. I now turn to share an experience where the inheritance of Orientalism worked against me as I used my metaphorical spiritual third eye in the space of hybridity to creatively choreograph a Bollywood dance piece.

*Self-Study of the Creative Process*

During Fall of 2009, I was asked to perform at a cultural charity event to raise funds for *Ganesh Shiva Mandir*,[589] a West Indian Hindu temple in Jersey City, NJ. At first, I declined the request to dance because the coordinators asked me to perform a Bollywood dance.[590] Varia states that no one really knows when the term Bollywood developed.[591] Varia defines Bollywood as, "Hindi-language based and populist cinema produced by major studios in Mumbai India."[592] Some do not feel the term "Bollywood"

is an appropriate term to describe the contributions of Indian cinema to a global society. According to Gopal and Moorti,

> "Actors such as Amitabh Bachchan and Ajay Devgan and noted film directors like Subhash Ghai believe that the term demeans and belittles the contributions of the Indian film industry reducing it to a subcontinental clone of Hollywood. Others suggest that the term has a more convoluted history, originating in the 1930s when a British cameraman described as Tollywood the Calcutta (now known as Kolkata) film studio located in the neighborhood of Tollygunge. Bollywood and other derivatives follow from this coinage."[593]

Raja Harishchandra from 1913 by Dadasaheb Phalke is known as India's first featured film. Phalke was inspired to develop Hindu, religious films after he viewed a film on Jesus.[594] India's film industry developed in a hybrid space where cinema was used to convey religious and cultural ideals. This was problematic in the colonial era of India. Therefore, the British enforced strict censorship laws between 1918-1920 for the industry.[595] There was a need for the British to promote films that served the purpose of colonization as opposed to endorsing films that "corrupted" Indians. When India gained independence, censorship laws continued to persist. The Indian government worried that commercial films would corrupt Indian culture.[596]

Throughout time, Bollywood dance came to move traditional Indian dance away from traditional, religious dance and towards Western ideals of dance as a form of entertainment and socialization. Even though Bollywood has the potential to be a productive space where cultures intersect, it is not the focus of my goal as a Hindu dancer. I am a traditional, Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer who desires to connect to a Supreme Being through dance. While Bollywood has its own merits, I do not claim to be a Bollywood cultural dancer. I once danced Bollywood dances to express

my feelings to loved ones but have moved away from a cultural form of dance and towards a sacred dance genre that aims to connect to a Supreme Being. Perhaps, I may return at some point to a form of Bollywood dance that develops in a pedagogical space of hybridity with a de-Orientalized knowledge base. However, at this time in my life, I do not wish to pursue Bollywood dance.

Nevertheless, the coordinators of the event pleaded with me to perform since I am a fairly well-known Indian classical dancer among the West Indians of New Jersey. I offered to dance a traditional, Kuchipudi dance but the coordinators did not desire a religious dance for the event. After coming to terms with the request, I eventually decided to meet the appeal. Here, I faced a struggle because I had to use creativity to choreograph a Bollywood dance while remaining true to my own religious identity as a Hindu dancer. I chose an upbeat-remixed version of a Bollywood song, *Aja Maahi*.[597] I added a classical instrumental[598] piece to start the dance piece. I used creativity to apply the language of Indian classical dance to implicitly choreograph the dance with love for Shri Krishna,[599] who represents a manifestation of the One Supreme Being in Hinduism. Princess Mirabai,[600] a contemporary Hindu Princess who danced with sincere devotion for Shri Krishna, inspired me implicitly. She adored Him as her spiritual husband even though she was married to Prince Bhoj.[601] As I choreographed the dance, I integrated Bollywood movements and classical movements with Princess Mirabai in mind as I attempted to blend the traditional and the modern. I did not know that the hardest part of my struggle with my use of creativity in this dance would not come until during and after the performance.

My phenomenological experience during the dance was surprising. I wore a traditional, Indian saari, which Hindu devotees would wear to a Hindu temple. I had great difficulty with blending sacred traditional clothing and modern Indian cultural wear. Because I did not want to disrespect my sacred traditional dance costume and jewels, I did not wear any of those pieces. Instead, I wore modern Indian cultural wear albeit a traditional type of clothing. This created a sense of discomfort for me because it was almost as if this warranted an exotic gaze due to the nature of the Bollywood genre of dance that often Orientalizes Indian female dancers to conform to Western ideals.

On the one hand, I had a self-perception of myself as a sacred dancer but on the other hand, there was an overwhelming exotic gaze from the spectators. I felt as if neither gaze overpowered the other but rather met robustly as I danced. The hybrid gaze that I sensed was untamed due to a lack of a de-Orientalized, hybrid pedagogy. Since there was no opportunity for me to use the dance pedagogically to teach, because this was a cultural event for a religious organization, I feel I did not have the chance to negotiate the gazes in the pedagogical space of hybridity. I was asked to “perform” not to “teach”. Regardless, there needs to be a hybridization between “performing” and “teaching.” Orientalism occurs when the dance as entertainment dominates the goal to teach. I essentially call for teaching to overshadow the dance as entertainment to prevent the advancement of Orientalism.

Despite this, I taught myself a valuable lesson. As a religious Hindu dancer and educator, I am not merely a “performer” but rather a “teacher” whose purpose is to teach regardless of the pedagogical space in which I dance. I learned that there must be certain

circumstances present for me to dance. One of the circumstances is that I must have the opportunity to use dance pedagogically to teach. In other words, I should not be approached as a mere "performer" but rather I should be received as a "teacher". Another circumstance is that I need to dance in pedagogical spaces that warrant a de-Orientalized educational gaze. If I dance in a cultural event, then I as a religious Hindu dancer am reduced to a cultural object that might unintentionally provoke an exotic gaze. To call sacred Indian classical Hindu dance "cultural" strips Hindu dance of its core – the sacred religious component.

To return to the abovementioned event, my dance seemed enjoyable to the audience, but I unintentionally misrepresented Indian classical Hindu dance because of the way I used creativity. I remember my mother, who did not attend the performance due to geographical distance, called me after the performance to relate the disappointment of so-called traditional, religious critics. Apparently, many religious critics were not pleased with the way I creatively used dance while many cultural critics thought the dance gave me a new "flare" away from the traditional way I perform. Whether or not this criticism is exaggerated or fictional, as a religious Hindu dancer, it is essential to use religious dance to enrich Hinduism regardless of the circumstances. Critics will have several criticisms that I need not concern myself with. The critics that I must concern myself with are my respected Gurus, Peer Scholars, and my own self-reflection.

Although it seems like I Orientalized the dance, there is a broader context of exoticism that influences how the dance becomes an Orientalized product. I did not

engage in an Orientalist choreography that disrespected Hinduism and the ethic of Hindu dance. On the contrary, I used my inner spiritual third eye to choreograph a dance piece that conveyed emotions to Shri Krishna through a contemporary Bollywood medium. Yet, the legacy of Orientalism worked against me, as many individuals did not maintain a de-Orientalized knowledge base of the dance. In this case, a postcolonial reality unavoidably works through me although I did not intend it. Through the choreography coupled with the gaze of the viewers, the dance became a product of Orientalism.

My Gurus surely would be disappointed with the way Orientalism thrived through me in the abovementioned event. From this experience, I learned that when I use creativity to integrate religious ideals with Bollywood, it must be done with more sensitivity to the religious nature of the dance. If religious dance becomes integrated into Bollywood, it has the potential to become a form of culture that does not necessarily remain true to the religious ideals of the dance form. The religious aspect of the dance, unfortunately, becomes a mere notion of culture if viewers cannot see the spirituality of the dance through their inner spiritual third eye. With this concern in mind, I must position myself within a larger social and political context that acknowledges how exoticism works through Orientalism as I choreograph hybrid dance forms.

I am in the role of the Hindu princess, Satyabhama.

Here, I emulate a strong sense of divinity that remains true to the Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance tradition as I am dressed in a traditional Kuchipudi costume. My phenomenological experience embraces the sacred gaze of the audience.

I dance *Aja Maahi*.

I unintentionally, with regret, misrepresented Indian classical Hindu dance. This is an example of why choreographers need to exercise caution when using creativity. It is crucial to be aware of the dangers of Orientalism and the implying exotic effects.

I developed a dance piece in the space of hybridity as I fused my knowledge of Hindu dance with the ideals of Bollywood. Although I maintained a de-Orientalized framework that considered postcolonial realities, I did not pay attention to the way Orientalism works through me when I dance. This minimized the efficiency of the creative process as I developed a hybrid dance piece. My body was reduced to a scarred body of the Orient that provoked an exotic gaze. Although I choreographed the dance with Princess Mirabai[602] in mind, I was unable to teach the spectators about my interpretation of the dance piece. Furthermore, the costume that I wore revealed the body in a way that was no longer protected by the sacred jewels of traditional Indian classical dance. I could not wear a traditional Kuchipudi costume for the dance because this would clearly dishonor and Orientalize the tradition since the jewels and costumes are to be worn at specific times for precise purposes on particular occasions. The Kuchipudi costume is sacred in the tradition.[603] It should not be worn to perform any dances outside of a religious, Hindu, sacred framework.

The traditional Kuchipudi costume shows the dancer's appreciation for material objects that symbolize the beauty of creation. The dancer traditionally wears jewels of the sun and the moon on the head. The dot in the center of the forehead is symbolic of the contemplative third eye that helps Hindus make ethical decisions. The mind and the body unite through the language of Indian classical Hindu dance to help the dancer live ethically in this world so that upon death, the dancer gains moksha (liberation) with a Supreme Being.

Round Sun

Crescent Moon

*I wear traditional, Indian classical Hindu dance jewelry. The round sun jewel symbolizes Surya Dev, the Sun God. The crescent moon symbolizes Chandra Maa, the moon God. From One God, the many emerge.*

Once the dancer has transformed into a sacred being through a contemplative dressing process, then the dancer is ready to participate in further contemplative practices of the Hindu ethic of dance.

At any rate, I could not wear the sacred Kuchipudi costume or jewels to perform the dance. Instead, I wore a saari, a long-length cloth that wraps around the body, along with fashionable costume jewelry. I also wore my hair down, which further mimicked the distortion of Indian women as erotic creatures of the Orient. I felt unprotected as I danced in an uncanny space where the screams and hooting from the audience chilled my body with the scars of an exotic gaze. Although the dance elicited this reaction, it crucial

to remember that this response stems from a long history of Orientalism that influences how Hindu dance and Bollywood dance are received in the West among Hindus and Indians. This is an internalized type of Orientalism due to the residual effects of colonization. What is at stake is essentially my own lack of how a social and political background informs the reception of Hindu dance and Bollywood dance in the West. This is important to understand since this always informs the gaze of the viewers. Although the dance maintains a de-Orientalized choreography of a hybrid dance form, I need to be more sensitive to postcolonial realities as I choreograph hybrid dance pieces.

My phenomenological experience from the above-mentioned event inspired me to attempt to engage in a creative process that enriches the Hindu dance tradition with an ethic of hybrid responsibility in mind. A few years later in 2011, my niece who was in Middle School at the time, asked me to perform a Bollywood dance with her. My niece and I performed *Mere Dholna*[604] for the Hindu organization, *GyaanKaSaagar's*[605] annual Mother's Day cultural event. Although I faced great discomfort in the above-mentioned event when I engaged in the creative process, I did not resist the inevitable space of hybridity where cultures are bound to intersect. Instead, I entered the pedagogical space of hybridity with more sensitivity as I used a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hindu dance and Bollywood dance to develop something new.

I listened to the semi-classical song, which had many traditional classical beats. I choreographed a three-scene dance piece. I engaged in hybrid pedagogy as I taught my niece about the devotion Princess Mirabai[606] and Princess Satybhama[607] had for Shri Krishna. In the first scene, my niece exhibited the qualities of Mirabai as she danced a

portion of a traditional prayer[608] to Shri Krishna. In the second scene, my niece and I danced an instrumental[609] that had no verbal words set to it. I played the role of Satyabhama and my niece played the role of Mirabai. Satyabhama desired to see Shri Krishna but could not find his physical body anywhere. Mirabai takes Satyabhama to pray in the mandir (Hindu place of worship). This is where Satyabhama realizes that Shri Krishna dwells in our hearts and radiates through our good actions. In the third scene, my niece and I successfully danced *Mere Dholna*,[610] the Bollywood song, with solely traditional Indian classical dance moves as we remained in our respective characters of Mirabai and Satyabhama.

My niece and I wore traditional Indian classical dance costumes as we danced, which further represented us as classical dancers. This was appropriate because of the meaning of the song lyrics as well as the choreography that explicitly focused on the dancer's love for Shri Krishna. Before we danced, the introducer read a short script that I had written about the scenes. I danced to the words in the script as the introducer read it out loud. I aimed to help the viewers of the dance build background knowledge for the dance.

As my niece and I danced, I felt a sincere sacred, educational gaze from the audience who wanted to learn more about the princesses. I did sense an innocent as opposed to a predatory exotic gaze. This was a curious gaze that wanted to know more about the uniqueness of the dance. I sense this because the spectator's eyes seemed focused with curiosity on the dance. While most of the event seemed rowdy, the crowd seemed very quiet during the dance. They cheered vibrantly with great enthusiasm after

the dance ended. The religious and cultural critics applauded this dance and repeatedly mention it to me as one of the best dances performed by my niece and me among West Indian Hindus. I feel this is because I maintained an ethic of hybrid responsibility as I choreographed the dance with creativity that blended traditional Indian classical dance and Bollywood dance in the space of hybridity with sensitivity. Thus, I focused more on teaching rather than entertaining.

There were still flaws with the dance that cause me to further think about the usage of creativity. The middle scene of the dance was choreographed with Satyabhama and Mira as devotees of Shri Krishna. Satyabhama lived during ancient times whereas Mirabai lived in modern times. Here, I feel there is a danger that I developed a fictitious scene, although quite a realistic scenario, that distorts Hindu history. If the audience viewed the created scene as history and not as a creatively developed scene, then I run the risk of Orientalizing Hinduism. I will unintentionally add to mythological interpretations of Hinduism if this occurs.

Nevertheless, I am satisfied with the hybrid pedagogy that I employed to teach my niece. She often mentions to me that this dance was one of the most profound dances that she has ever engaged in. My niece expressed to me that she danced from her heart with love for Shri Krishna as she connected to a Supreme Being through the medium of dance. Together, we frequently dance the song in the private space of our home. When the opportunity presents itself, she repeatedly asks me to dance the song with her on stage. The public requests us to dance this particular song continuously, probably because of the powerful experience that occurs. I am satisfied with the way I taught my niece because

through hybrid pedagogy, she acknowledged her purpose in the dance to intentionally bond with a Supreme Being. Likewise, I felt a sense of purpose as a Hindu dancer who seeks to connect to a Supreme Being and think deeply about how to live in the world as an interconnected part of humanity. While I was pleased with the hybrid pedagogy that I employed to teach my niece, I was dissatisfied with the lack of hybrid pedagogy for the attendees who viewed the dance.

As I draw upon the work of Bhabha, I realize that I cannot return to a pure, accurate history. The introducer who read the script, for the abovementioned dance, as I performed the dance movements was the only opportunity that I had to engage in de-Orientalized pedagogy with the viewers of the dance. The script mentioned that Satyabhama was an ancient Hindu princess whereas Mirabai was a modern Hindu princess. Thus, it is evident that they did not live historically at the same time. I do not sense the audience viewed the dance as historical. I was also concerned when the audience laughed as I, in the role of Satyabhama, cried intensely because I could not find Shri Krishna's physical body. This was not meant to be humorous but rather was meant to relate the character trait of Satyabhama who was in despair when she was not with Shri Krishna. This almost seemed like a mockery to me who sincerely felt Satyabhama's pain. Nevertheless, I am sure that was not the intent of this seemingly harmless audience. Here, it seems that I became an entertainer for the audience. I am not an "entertainer" or a "performer" but rather, I am a Hindu dancer who might at some points "entertain" or "perform", but that is not the goal. My goal is to educate though Hindu dance about Hinduism with postcolonial realities in mind. Although the dance was well received, I do

not sense that I taught the spectators about Shri Krishna, Satyabhama, and Mira. Instead, the spectators seemed to enjoy the sacredness of the dance, which was evident in the costume and choreography, but I do not sense that they learned about the character traits of Shri Krishna, Satyabhama, and Mira. While I do not feel that I was able to successfully teach the spectators, I do feel my niece learned a great deal about Satyabhama and Mira. I do feel a sense of satisfaction knowing that I was able to teach my niece about Hinduism through Hindu dance.

*Bollywood*

I do not mean to suggest that Bollywood[611] is always an Orientalized space that endorses a fictionalized version of Indian culture. On the contrary, Bollywood provides a valuable pedagogical space for diasporic cultures to meet to produce something new. What I am suggesting is that what develops in the culture of Bollywood has the ability to cause Orientalism to flourish if there is no sensitivity to postcolonial realities. This is important to consider because Bollywood is a hybrid space where cultures inevitably intertwine.

Although my dance interests do not primarily focus on cultural dance but rather concentrates on Hindu dance, as a young girl, I often danced Bollywood songs for cultural events, weddings, birthday celebrations, baby showers, and so forth. Here, I aim to stress the point that Bollywood does provide an opportunity for something new to develop in the space of hybridity as culture moves with time. I now turn to briefly share my experiences with Bollywood to further press this point. While my larger project focuses on how I use Hindu dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism, here I wish to

acknowledge the insightful space of Bollywood to press my point of how creativity develops in a space of hybridity where cultures meet. In this space, I share my inner emotions with humankind to celebrate, in most cases, a joyous part of life.

One of my fondest memories was a Bollywood dance that I danced for my elder brother's birthday celebration, which was a religious and cultural celebration that was held at the Hindu Dharmic Sabha[612] mandir (temple) in Jersey City, New Jersey. It was a warm, summer evening on a Saturday in the month of June. My brother was under the impression that he was attending the mandir (temple) to perform a puja (worship) service. He was surprised when crowd in the mandir stood as they shouted "Surprise" as he entered the mandir. The crowd then sat on the ground, many in lotus-like positions, as my Bouji (sister-in-law) began the program. There were many religious and cultural items on the program for the evening.

As a younger teenage sister, I expressed sisterly love for my elder brother as I danced *Kehte Hain Ye Raakhi Ke Dhaage*.[613] I wore a deep blue, traditional saari (long piece of clothing) to cover my body from neck to toe as I danced with sisterly love for my elder brother.

This picture is from that very day.

As the music for the dance began, I tied a rakhi[614] on my brother's wrist to signify our Raksha Bandhan[615] bond. A rakhi is a sacred thread that a sister ties on a brother's wrist during a Raksha Bandhan celebration, which usually occurs annually in the month of August. The sacred thread symbolizes the eternal bond between a brother and sister. The thread reminds the brother that one of his duties in life is to protect his sister. Also, the thread symbolizes the One Supreme Being in Hinduism who manifests as Bramha (to

create), Vishnu (to sustain), and Shiva (to destroy). After I tied the rakhi on my brother's wrist during the dance, my brother clasped his hands together with a tear in his eye as I encircled him with a sacred arti to send him my well wishes and seek his blessings as my elder brother. This has a religious significance in this cultural dance that expresses my sisterly love to my elder brother.

The dance then went on to describe the special familial bond between a brother and sister. Essentially, I choreographed the dance to use the dance language to share the story of my brother and I through dance. The Hindi song lyrics began by stating that today is a day, known as Raksha Bandhan, that honors my brother. Although Raksha Bandhan is celebrated every August, every day is Raksha Bandhan for my brother and me. The song lyrics, composed in first person, go on to describe the way I, as a sister, take my brother's wrist to tie the sacred rakhi, a thread that symbolizes the bond between a brother who protects his sister. It continues to state that no mater how many years or eras pass, the bond of love between us, as brother and sister, will never fade. I feel this way about my brother whom I will eternally love.

The first stanza describes the sacred arti (circling of fire) that I, as a sister, perform on my brother. The light gives good luck and happiness me as my face beamed as bright as the sun. The lyrics state that my brother and I make warm wishes and offer prayers in our moments of happiness. The second stanza describes the way my brother's shadow protects me as his sister. Our lives were raised together with this eternal bond of sibling love between us. The lyrics state that my brother will always be there when I need him, which he has and will continue to be. The last stanza of the dance describes

the way my brother gives me everything that I need. Now, he also brings happiness to my Bouji (sister-in-law). In the dance, I also paid respect to my Bouji as she is the light of my brother's heart. I welcome her into my heart to share in this eternal familial bond.

Through this dance, I felt connected to my brother and Bouji (sister-in-law) in a manner that transcended our life on earth. It was as if our bond as a family was created as an eternal bond that could never end long before we were even born on earth. I still remember this dance keenly although many years have passed. The love between my brother, Bouji, and I remains strong and eternal. I enjoy adorning my brother's wrist with the sacred rakhi on Raksha Bandhan day every year. I shower my brother with many homemade sweets and my brother, along with my Bouji, gives me gifts. Although gift giving is traditionally done as the brother gives to the sister, I reciprocate the gift giving to my brother as I too wish to shower him with gifts. Although Raksha Bandhan occurs annually, my brother and I often celebrate our brother-sister bond when meet with traditional Raksha Bandhan gestures. The below series of pictures are from Raksha Bandhan Day on August 10, 2014 at my brother and bouji's residence.

I tie the sacred rakhi on my brother's right hand wrist.

I adorn my brother's forehead with fragrant smelling chandan.

I place a flower on my brother's head to honor him.

I encircle my brother three times with the arti (sacred flame of auspiciousness). My brother raises his right hand to bless me.

I bow to my brother's feet as I seek his blessings. He blesses me with his right hand.

I feed my brother vegetarian sweets with my hands.  I also present him with homemade baked sweets.

We exchange gifts.

Aside from family celebrations, I often danced Bollywood songs annually for the United Hindu Federation (UHFONJ) of New Jersey's annual Phagwah Parades held in the month of March in Jersey City, New Jersey. Phagwah, also known as Holi, [616] celebrates the beginning of spring. Although there is a profound religious significance to Holi,[617] there is also a deep cultural significance. West Indians gather annually in Jersey City for a Phagwah Parade to culturally celebrate the coming of spring by spraying colorful water and smearing colorful powders on each other and on the earth that is about to blossom with the scent of spring. As mentioned earlier in this project, my ancestors, along with the ancestors of many West Indians, were taken from India to the Caribbean as indentured servants to work on the plantations. In India, our ancestors would celebrate Holi each spring with a festival of colors. This celebration traveled across to the Carribbean and has now crossed the borders of the USA.

One of my most cherished memories was when I, as a teenager, taught the United Hindu Federation of New Jersey Youth Group to dance *Rang Leke Deewane Aa Gaye*[618] in celebration of Holi, [619] which occurs in the month of March. This is a cultural song from Bollywood that describes the colorful season of spring. It was difficult to choreograph the dance within the three to four practice sessions that I had to teach about twelve to fifteen male and female youths a dance. The youths were from different mandirs (temples) throughout Jersey City, but the rehearsals were held only on Sundays at the Hindu Dharmic Sabha[620] mandir for about two hours. Aside from myself, no one in the group was a student of Indian classical dance. Therefore, I could not choreograph

the dance using the strict language of the Indian classical dance tradition. Yet, I had to choreograph the dance with an ethic of hybrid responsibility in a hybrid space where I developed dance movements that correlated with the meaning of the Bollywood song. I also had to consider the diverse age group of students in addition to the capability of each individual. In this space, I was a cultural dancer who aimed to celebrate the coming of spring with my peers, family, and the community at large through the medium of a Bollywood song.

On the sunny day of the Phagwah parade, all the youths wore white clothing in honor of Holi. The white clothing is like a canvas for the colorful sprays and powders. We met at the departure point of the parade at the intersection of Kennedy Boulevard and Stegman Parkway in Jersey City, New Jersey. We marched on Kennedy Boulevard to Lincoln Park as we rode on colorful floats. When we arrived to Lincoln Park, we organized ourselves for our routine as we prepared to dance on the metal stage. Some of the youths danced with socks but I danced barefoot on the cold metal stage outdoors in Lincoln Park. I choreographed the dance with very simple dance moves for the youths, but moves that I was comfortable with for me as a classical dancer. Nadiya Bahadur, Shushila Etwaru, Nadina Budhoo and I entered the stage together dancing to the chorus line, “Rang Leke Deewane Aa Gaye.” We were paired with male counter-parts. I danced with Sachin Girdhari in the center of the stage as other pairs danced to the right and left of us. The young children, which included Anjanee Bahadur and Muni Bahadur, danced on the sides on the stage. There were many other youths who were a part of this dance. I

found a way to include all of the youths in a space of hybridity where our culture intersected together.

I had to meet many challenges as I choreographed this dance. The youths my age seemed to think of this as a youthful, fun dance whereas I had a more serious approach. I wished to focus on the meaning of the song as a part of the festival of Holi. Moreover, I hoped to use the traditional dance language to choreograph the dance. As an emerging Hindu dancer, I wished to remain faithful to the Hindu ethic of dance as related in the *Natya Shastra*.[621] While the youths granted me the chance to choreograph the dance, I sense that they also might have thought that I felt entitled to do so. I did not ask for advice on the dance movements nor did the group and I discuss possible choreography routines. While I probably should have, I did not want to run the risk that something misrepresentative of the lyrics and of the festival of Holi would develop. Instead, I turned to my dance Guru for suggestions on choreography. Even at a young age, I had to struggle with the pedagogical challenges of creativity in the space of hybridity. Nevertheless, I sense that I successfully met the challenges of choreographing a Bollywood cultural dance for my peers in a space of hybridity where cultures intersect.

*Implications for the Creative Process*

There is a need to maintain a de-Orientalized knowledge base to develop something new in the space of hybridity with postcolonial realities in mind. If a de-Orientalized knowledge base coupled with an ethic of hybrid responsibility is not present, then there is a great risk that Orientalism will thrive as something new develops. For this reason, it is an ongoing interest to reevaluate the issue of creativity repeatedly since

cultures do not remain static but rather are diasporic. I urge dancers across dance genres, both Eastern and Western, to maintain a sensitive awareness throughout the creative process to prevent further Orientalism of religion and culture. It is crucial to uphold an ethic of hybrid responsibility for creative innovations in the pedagogical space of hybridity.

Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn were American dance pioneers who caused Orientalism to flourish because they applied Orientalist knowledge to the creative process. Consequently, they furthered Orientalism through the creative process. Uday Shankar also engaged in a creative process without sensitivity to postcolonial realities. These dancers did not seek the guidance of a dance Guru to serve as a facilitator throughout the creative process. The dance Guru has a vital role as a facilitator who helps students maintain a de-Orientalized knowledge base through a creative process that considers the diasporic nature of cultures.

Through my self-study, I maintain that it is urgent to maintain a de-Orientalized knowledge base that sustains an ethic of hybrid responsibility throughout the creative process, which occurs in the pedagogical space of hybridity. At times, my hybrid pedagogy looks very messy in the pedagogical space of hybridity. For me, hybrid pedagogy consists of a few key elements that commonly develop in the hybrid space in which I teach. The educator should pay attention to each individual student in an effort to guide the student to explore the innermost self to find a purpose that extends out into humanity. Once students find their purpose, then educators may guide the students to intentionally aim to explore and fulfill a purpose that connects to the world. As I employ

hybrid pedagogy, I focus on building a de-Orientalized epistemological framework, engaging in dialogue, and coming together with a hybrid activity where something new develops. The characteristics of the *newness* will vary depending upon the nature of the individuals in the space. In some cases, we construct new terminology that we give meaning. At other times, we compose new choreography through a creative process with our purpose in mind. To maximize the efficiency of the creative process, it is imperative to apply a de-Orientalized knowledge base to develop something new. If the creative process is unmediated by a de-Orientalized knowledge base that maintains an ethic of hybrid responsibility, then there is an opportunity for an Orientalist parasite to thrive.

# Chapter 9
# Conclusion

I aim to move the exotic gaze of non-Hindus to an educational gaze that aspires to learn about Hindu ethics in a manner that considers the inter-religious and inter-cultural nature of society. This project specifically focused on the issue of exoticism that occurs when I use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as a pedagogical tool to educate non-Hindus. In this chapter, I will return to my research questions to point to my educational theory about Kuchipudi dance that stems from Said's notion of Orientalism.[622] This chapter will provide an overarching summary to encapsulate this project. I maintain that this philosophical project contributes to the intersecting fields of academia. Yet, as with almost all research ventures, there are limitations to this self-study. My limitations are not permanent obstacles but rather are points of departure for my life-long self-study.

Earlier in the introduction, I raised a series of questions about Kuchipudi dance education. These questions overlap and intertwine with one another. My research questions focus on the Kuchipudi[623] dance tradition itself and experiences of the East and the West. The main question is how can I use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to provoke an educational gaze that overcomes exoticism and moves beyond the isolation of religions and cultures? Essentially, I must employ a postcolonial pedagogy[624] with sensitivity to the diasporic nature of cultures and the legacy of colonization. It is imperative for me to confront exoticism in an effort to transform the exoticism to something educational. How can I present a de-Orientalized pedagogy that changes the fundamental Western assumptions that Orientalizes the East? To accomplish this task, I must deconstruct Orientalist interpretations and then reconstruct de-Orientalized

interpretations to prevent Orientalism from thriving. How can Kuchipudi dance live on in a hybrid[625] space today but yet retain the traditions of the past? Overall, this occurs through a creative process in the pedagogical space of hybridity that remains sensitive to the ideals of religion and culture. How can Kuchipudi dancers maintain fidelity to the Hindu ethic of dance without a belief in culture as pure and untainted since culture is an unstable because it constantly changes? This is a part of the development of a faith-based religious Hindu epistemological framework that does not seek to indoctrinate non-Hindus. These questions focus on my problem of exoticism that emerges based on my scholarly work that is linked to my personal experiences as a Westerner of Eastern descent who maintains an Eastern Hindu dance practice.

*Summary of Chapters*

Chapter One provides an introduction of my background to help position me as a self-study researcher. Following this, I share the self-study methodology in Chapter Two. Before I can focus on educating non-Hindus about Hinduism through Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance, I must maintain an awareness of the pedagogical space[626] in which I teach, as I relate in Chapter Three. Each pedagogical space warrants a distinct pedagogical stance based on certain educational challenges and particular concerns that are framed by a postcolonial reality. My central question here is how can I serve as an educator who uses Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance in a particular pedagogical space to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. Of what pedagogical challenges do I need to be aware? What pedagogical concerns do I need to address in each pedagogical space in which I teach?

The pedagogical spaces in which I teach are connected to larger social, political, and economic spaces. My concern is maintaining a de-Orientalized pedagogy in the pedagogical spaces in which I teach. Edward Said,[627] Homi Bhabha,[628] and Ashis Nandy[629] help me to come to terms with three particular pedagogical spaces in which I often teach. Edward Said influences me when I teach in an "overlapping pedagogical space". Homi Bhabha inspires me to acknowledge that I teach in a "pedagogical space of hybridity". Ashis Nandy motivates me to maintain an awareness of the "pedagogical space of mirroring" in which I teach. In each space, I need to employ a particular pedagogical stance to address specific pedagogical concerns. Although I teach primarily in one of these spaces when I educate non-Hindus, the other spaces may be present in my primary pedagogical space. These spaces are not separate but rather intertwine with one another.

In an overlapping pedagogical space, I aim to help non-Hindus construct a de-Orientalized epistemological knowledge base of Hinduism and Indian culture. Here, I hope to deconstruct Orientalist knowledge and reconstruct a de-Orientalist stance of Hinduism. This usually occurs through a dialogical[630] discussion that uses history as a pedagogical tool. It is crucial to think about what "official" history is and reveal facts from concealed Orientalist sources. My main concern here is the development of a de-Orientalized knowledge base and epistemological framework of Hinduism and Indian culture.

In the pedagogical space of hybridity, Bhabha[631] helps me to realize that there is a need to construct something new with de-Orientalized knowledge in mind. This newness

should remain sensitive to Eastern and Western ideals. The East and the West are illusionary paradoxes that are interconnected and co-dependent. If de-Orientalized knowledge is not present, then there is a danger that an insensitive Orientalist ideology that furthers Orientalist agendas will develop in the space of hybridity. What develops in the space of hybridity has the potential to transform the East and the West. Therefore, it is imperative to tread with caution in this space. Because of the diasporic nature of cultures, my pressing concern here is that there is a need to develop something new but that must be done with a de-Orientalized knowledge base that is sensitive to Eastern and Western ideals.

Nandy[632] discusses a philosophical mirroring where the "colonized" mirrors the "colonizer". Nandy inspires me in a pedagogical space of mirroring where I acknowledge a false illusionary dichotomy of the West and the East. In the pedagogical space of mirroring, it is crucial to offer a space for a de-Orientalized analysis of Hinduism that nurtures a de-Orientalized development of knowledge. My main pedagogical concern, in this space of mirroring, which usually occurs in a theatrical space where there is a stage present, is that I cannot directly interact with the viewers of the dance through dialogue. Instead, I need to trust my ability to present a de-Orientalized framework of Hinduism and also rely on the audience's self-interpretation. I consider it necessary to provide non-Hindus with a de-Orientalized framework of Hinduism that makes them aware of the dangers of Orientalism. It is my hope that this will help non-Hindus appreciate the sacredness of Hindu dance.

After I maintain an awareness of the pedagogical space in which I will teach, then I address the assumption that I am a liturgical dancer in Chapter Four. In many cases, my colleagues often refer to me as a liturgical dancer when they advertise campus-wide lectures or invited class presentations. For this reason, I consider it necessary to de-Orientalize the notion that I am a liturgical dancer.

Critics might argue that Hindu dancers are liturgical dancers because Hindu dancers often engage in worship. However, to call Hindu dance "liturgical" [633] prescribes a particular Orientalized history to Hindu dance since "liturgical dance" [634] refers to a particular genre of Christian dance. "Liturgical dance" is not an accurate description of the specific history of Hindu dance as an Eastern dance form. From a postcolonial perspective, it is important to acknowledge Hindu dancers as "Hindu dancers" and Christian liturgical dancers as "liturgical dancers". Those who insist that Hindu dance is "liturgical dance" need to maintain an awareness of the concealed hidden power manipulations of the West that furthers Orientalist agendas.

A de-Orientalized stance would approach Hindu dance and liturgical dance with sensitivity for each respective tradition, which has its own history. For instance, Bramha created Hindu dance to tame the five senses. The *Natya Shastra*[635] is an ancient text of Hinduism that relates the ethic of Hindu dance. Unlike Hindu dance, Christian liturgical dance developed in contemporary times and does not have a religious text that explicitly relates the ethic of Christian dance. While Hindu dance has a particular dance curriculum and dance pedagogy,[636] Christian liturgical dance does not have a standard curriculum or a specific dance pedagogy across the tradition. To call Hindu dance "liturgical" imposes

Western ideals onto Hindu dance because it ascribes a particular Orientalized history to Hindu dance. This causes Orientalism and colonizing agendas to flourish.

Once I maintain an awareness of the pedagogical space in which I teach and confront the assumption that I am a liturgical dancer, I then relate my expectations of the type of gaze that I warrant as a Hindu dancer in Chapter Five. This is important because the gazes of the viewers impact my phenomenology, which affects how I use Kuchipudi dance as pedagogy.

Laura Mulvey's[637] notion of the male gaze focuses on the sexualization of the female body. When my body feels sexualized, it blocks my ability to use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as pedagogy. The male gaze becomes an obstacle that I must overcome to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. E. Ann Kaplan's[638] postcolonial notion of the imperial gaze focuses on how Whites civilize non-Whites through dominance linked to power. Sometimes, I must confront an imperial gaze that attempts to civilize me in a dominant manner that forces Western ideals onto me. When I sense the imperial gaze, it has the potential to block my ability to serve as an educator because of the long legacy of colonialism that is attached to this gaze that does not break away from Orientalist agendas. David Morgan's[639] notion of the sacred gaze provides a method to view religious objects. Morgan shows how to transform the male gaze and the imperial gaze to a sacred gaze that religious objects warrant. I hope that viewers will employ a sacred gaze as they view me as a Hindu dancer. Overall, I hope to warrant a de-Orientalized educational gaze as I use Kuchipudi dance as a pedagogical tool to

educate non-Hindus about Hinduism. An Orientalized educational gaze furthers Orientalist and colonizing agendas.

I hope to contribute to existing literature on gaze theory as I aim to transform the male gaze and the imperial gaze to a de-Orientalized educational gaze that pays close attention to my phenomenology that may promote or block my pedagogical ability to teach. Essentially, I must protect myself from the harmful exoticism that blocks my pedagogical ability. To accomplish this task, I develop the notion of a shield that protects my body from the phenomenological scars of exoticism.

After I clarify the type of gaze that I warrant in the pedagogical spaces in which I teach as a non-liturgical dancer, I then consider it necessary to confront a common misconception of Hinduism as a polytheistic religion in Chapter Six. With the confrontation of this misconception in mind, I turn to the *Panchadasi*[640] scripture of Hinduism. Satchitanand (Supreme Being) creates Maya (illusion) with three main characteristics that emerge from Satchitanand. Satva (purity), rajas (combination of more purity and less impurity), and tamas (a combination of less purity and more impurity) form Maya (illusion). The incarnations of the Supreme Being on earth is due to the Satva (purity) quality, which causes the incarnations to be the closest connection to the Supreme Being. Despite dualist interpretations, Hindu scriptures state that we emerge from and merge back to Satchitanand (Supreme Being) since we are a part of a Supreme Being whether we believe or not. Maya (illusion) is not separate from Satchitanand who is Maya. For this reason, I maintain that Hinduism is monistic because from the One Supreme Being, many emerge that is actually a part, and not separate from, the One.

It is crucial to understand Hinduism from a Hindu perspective to ensure the decolonization of Hinduism and Indian culture. A Western hidden curriculum[641] that endorses the so-called polytheism of Hinduism creates a fictional version of Hinduism due to a lack of comprehension of Hinduism from a Hindu perspective. Students then learn about false histories through a hidden system that creates a dichotomy of "us" as civilized and "them" as uncivilized. For this reason, there is an urgency to employ a postcolonial pedagogy[642] to confront the hidden curriculum of the West. Postcolonial pedagogy uncovers the cloaked colonizing agendas in hidden curriculums.

Aside from the metaphysical claims of Hinduism, in Chapter Seven I confront the notion that the epics of Hinduism are imaginary. This is a common assumption with which I must confront in higher education when I dance the *Ramayana*.[643] This assumption stems from colonizing agendas that rewrote the history and poetry of Hinduism. Some creative versions of the Hindu epics enrich Hinduism while other versions harm the tradition due to the colonizing ideology used as a framework for the compositions. Individuals who are exposed to Orientalized histories of the Hindu epics develop preconceived notions about the epics. This, in turn, has an impact on the gaze that I sense when I convey the epics through dance. Those with Orientalized conceptions of the Hindu epics often label me as delusional because they do not understand my religious epistemological framework as a faith-based Hindu. This prevents an educational gaze that needs to first understand a religious faith-based Hindu epistemological framework of knowledge before criticisms.

Religious epistemology[644] is a valid epistemological framework for forming knowledge. I use a religious epistemological framework to restore the Hindu epics as a part of Hindu history and as a part of an Indian educational curriculum. Even though I present archeological evidence of the historicity of the *Ramayana*,[645] it is not my goal to prove the *Ramayana* as history. The *Ramayana* in and of itself is historical for faith-based Hindus who employ a religious epistemological framework. Through the presentation of archeological evidence, I aim to show how Orientalists[646] moved the educational curriculum of India from a valid Indian history that stems from the Hindu epics to an Orientalist curriculum that dismissed the religious epistemological framework of India. Some Indians came to believe the Orientalist curriculum taught in Indian schools. For instance, Michael Madhusudana Datta,[647] a Hindu boy who transformed into a product of Orientalism, believed the colonizing curriculum of British India. Datta sought to annihilate the religious epistemological framework of faith-based Hindus.

Despite Orientalist interpretations, I am not delusional because I believe in the Hindu epics. When I dance the Hindu epics, it is evident that I believe in the historicity of the epics, which are an ethical stimulus for moral inquiry. Regardless of the literary genre, the Hindu epics stimulate philosophical questions that help individuals think about ethics. Essentially, I aim to employ a postcolonial, de-Orientalized pedagogy to reframe the Hindu epics to help viewers of my dances build background knowledge that moves away from Orientalist misconceptions.

Aside from preconceived notions of Hindu metaphysics and the Hindu epics, I address the pedagogical challenge of creativity as I choreograph Hindu dances in Chapter

Eight. I must maintain a de-Orientalized knowledge base as I develop something new in the pedagogical space of hybridity.[648] I misrepresented Hinduism when I unintentionally employed an Orientalist framework to choreograph a Bollywood dance[649] with religious ideals. Although I felt the scars of exoticism, I still pursued the challenge of creativity in the pedagogical space of hybridity. I continued to engage in the creative process to choreograph dances with a de-Orientalized knowledge base of Hinduism and Indian culture.

Without a de-Orientalized knowledge base, there is a risk that what develops in the space of hybridity may further Orientalism. For instance, American dance pioneers Ruth St. Denis[650] and Ted Shawn[651] along with the Indian dancer Uday Shankar[652] used an Orientalist framework to engage in the creative process as they sought to develop something new. This caused Orientalism to thrive through their dances. These dancers attempted to perform Hindu-themed dancers without sensitivity to the Hindu ethic of dance. Moreover, these dancers did not have a Hindu dance Guru[653] to facilitate the creative process. Dancers across Western and Eastern dance genres need to reevaluate the challenge of creativity with sensitivity because what develops through the creative process has the potential to Orientalize. Afterwards, I present a concluding chapter to review this project.

*Contribution of Research*

This project contributes in significant ways to an intersecting field of academic disciplines. I contribute to the field of postcolonial studies because this project develops a postcolonial pedagogy for educators to consider when teaching about the historicity of

religions and cultures across the globe. While I focus on Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as a pedagogical tool, postcolonial scholars may employ my method with other pedagogical tools to improve postcolonial pedagogy. I help develop a novel methodology that combines post-colonialism with phenomenology. My point here is that it is crucial to maintain an awareness of how knowledge develops and then is linked to power. For this reason, there is an urgency to foster de-Orientalized knowledge to prevent the desecration of religion and culture.

Although I focus on Kuchipudi dance as a pedagogical tool to educate non-Hindus, this project shows scholars how to develop a de-Orientalized postcolonial pedagogy with Said's theory of Orientalism as a point of departure. A key element of de-Orientalized pedagogy is to first consider epistemological frameworks. There is a need to return to primary sources to study religion and culture to learn about the intentions of traditions. Once educators develop a de-Orientalized knowledge base, educators can consider the hybridity that advances inter-religious and intercultural relations. If educators do not employ a de-Orientalized pedagogy, then there is a risk that colonization will continue through a hidden curriculum that aims to manipulate students during a cloaked educative process. With this concern in mind, I hope to contribute to the field of educational research through an emphasis on de-Orientalized pedagogy.

My self-study method is unique because it calls upon the necessity to pay close attention to how pedagogical processes develop in a variety of pedagogical spaces that need to consider postcolonial realities. I ask educators to acknowledge how their identity influences their epistemological framework in these spaces. Although there are

guidelines for self-study, each research project develops organically for self-study researchers. My data collection methods developed based on the needs of my individual project. For me, it was essential to engage in several rounds of coding my data for analysis. During the first round of coding, I discovered emerging themes. I grouped the themes in the second round of coding. Then, I paid close attention to the subthemes within each theme as I pursued a third round of coding. After, I moved forward with a continued deliberation with my Peer Scholars who helped me challenge my assumptions and think further about the data analysis.

I contribute terminology to the self-study literature. While the term "critical friend" is commonly used in self-study, I use the term "Peer Scholar". The term "Peer Scholar" seems more appropriate to me than "critical friend". "Critical friend" seems to place a power emphasis on the type of "friend" that helps with research. The term "critical" gives this "friend" power to deliberate about the research. Also, there is a hidden dynamic to what constitutes the notion of a "friend". This implies that a "critical friend" is a "friend". However, this may not be the case. On the contrary, "Peer Scholar" is a less combative, confrontational term that describes a trusted, scholarly colleague. I prefer to use the term "Peer Scholar(s)" to describe the individuals that I trust enough to make myself completely vulnerable with as I share all the aspects of my research. With my Peer Scholars, I do not sense a power dynamic between us but rather I feel that I am in a safe environment where I can let go of all of my concerns. I urge self-study researchers to consider the term "Peer Scholars" in future self-study research projects.

This project contributes to the philosophical and religious studies literature because it focuses on a religious epistemological framework coupled with phenomenology. I hope philosophers will not dismiss a de-Orientalized epistemological framework as a legitimate source of knowing. While logic is a favored epistemological stance, some things are beyond logical reasoning. Faith-based epistemological systems do not depend on logic to develop knowledge. Rather, phenomenological experiences, and not just logic, contribute to the epistemological growth of individuals. Philosophers need to understand the epistemological stance of religion in order to develop the longstanding field of philosophy. If scholars ignore the intellectual rigor of faith-based epistemology, then these scholars irresponsibly deny an inevitable aspect of epistemology that maintains a strong influence on epistemological systems of many individuals of the world. Moreover, the philosophical Academy then becomes limited in the capacity to explore legitimate philosophical claims that have the ability to transform the field in an effort to better understand relate to the epistemological systems across the globe.

*Limitations of Research*

There were several limitations to this philosophical project. One limitation concerns the makeup of the population that I hope to educate. I focus primarily on developing a de-Orientalized pedagogy in higher education. I have not rigorously explored the possibility of using Hindu dance to educate students in grades k-12. This would point to the possibility of a separate project that centers on the notion of religion and culture in elementary and secondary education. With this potential project, I suspect a variety of new pedagogical, social, and political challenges would arise.

Another important limitation of my self-study concerns the tension that I feel as a faith-based Hindu who teaches non-Hindus through the medium of Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance in a variety of pedagogical spaces. I worry that viewers will feel that I wish to impose a Hindu epistemological framework onto them. Although this is not the case, I do consider it necessary to uphold the ethic of Hindu dance, even in the secular spaces in which I teach. It is difficult for me to reconcile this tension of my identity as a faith-based Hindu and educator, which raises a very significant issue.

This tension deepens for me as I dance in hybrid spaces where I am forced to inevitably come to terms with other forms of dance outside of Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. This occurs not only in Western dance, but also in Indian culture. I face a pedagogical dilemma when I am asked to choreograph Bollywood dances that do not seem to resonate with my identity as a faith-based Hindu dancer. While I relate the challenge of creativity in this project, my self-study data does not point to a reconciliation of myself as a faith-based Hindu who sometimes engages in Bollywood dance. I am constantly in an inevitable hybrid space that is always under construction because of the diasporic aspect of culture. This space requires constant epistemological care that frequently thinks about the nature of knowledge. Essentially, knowledge is always constructed in different ways in the space of hybridity. For this reason, I will continually pay close attention to epistemology in a hybrid space. I hope to explore these concerns further as I continue with my life-long self-study.

Aside from the phenomenological limitations I endure as a Hindu dancer who educates non-Hindus, there is a major theoretical constraint to this project. I focus

heavily on the way the West engages in the Orientalism of Hinduism and Indian culture, but I minimally point to how Hindus and Indians Orientalize themselves due to a Western influence. Michael Madhusudana Datta (Dutt)[654] is only one historical example of many Indians who furthered Orientalist agendas. Throughout history, several Hindus and Indians caused Orientalism to thrive. In the future, I would like to analyze the colonial hidden curriculums of Hindu (Hindoo) College and other institutions of learning in British India to determine how the West directly used education to produce Indians who in turn employed Orientalism.

I place a great deal of emphasis on education that occurs directly in the pedagogical spaces in which I teach. In other words, I focus on my phenomenology when I dance as opposed to when I watch myself dance in a visual teaching clip. The visual teaching clips that I develop for theatricals are teaching presentations that do not include entire dance pieces where I dance. Several colleagues across disciplines in higher education often ask me to share media of me as I dance because they would like to show this broadcasting as a part of their courses. I have not developed my pedagogy enough to the point where I feel that I can share media of myself with educators because I fear there is a great chance that Orientalism will occur. My ongoing self-study causes me to consider the possibility of developing educational media sources where I confront Orientalism through the medium of Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. Educational media sources have the potential to help me overcome strenuous geographical dilemmas.

This project was limited to New Jersey, New York, Eastern Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maryland. There is a great deal of religious and cultural

diversity on Northeast coast of the nation. However, this may or may not be the case beyond the Northeast. With this possibility in mind, my Hindu dance presentations might be received differently in different regions of the nation. In turn, this may present new pedagogical challenges and concerns for me as a postcolonial educator who employs a self-study methodology.

Self-study is a type of research that focuses on the phenomenological self. With this emphasis in mind, the research methodology becomes procrustean if it is forced to fit a dominative research ideology. For this reason, my project moves away from a procrustean fit to research ideology. I do not follow the traditional methodology of educational research that forces me to engage in research in a prescribed manner. On the contrary, I developed an organic methodology based on the needs of my project.

*Criticisms*

One of the most well known critics of self-study is Ken Zeichner[655] who believes that self-study researchers need to position self-study as a viable methodology in educational research. I urge educational researchers to place an emphasis on non-traditional research methodologies to prevent a domineering research ideology from consuming research. It is unfortunate, as Zeichner indicates, that one of the national reviews of teacher education research did not acknowledge self-study in policy debates due to the lack of "sample" sizes.[656] A fundamental problem in educational research is that it does not pay proper attention to research methods outside of the dominating qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This is evident in the research requirements of many graduate programs and also conferences that require a specific

research methodology for submissions. A common formula is to list in order: objectives, theoretical framework, method, data, and results. Although this format may work well for qualitative and quantitative methods, it does not necessarily acknowledge the methodology for philosophical research.

Zeichner[657] asserts that self-study researchers need to focus more on the knowledge that emerges from self-study as opposed to methodology. Anastasia Samaras and Anne Freese[658] respond to Zeichner in a later publication. Samaras and Freese show that Zeichner does not acknowledge earlier publications that focus on knowledge that develops from self-study. For instance, Samaras and Freese refer to Tidwell and Fitzgerald's self-study on diversity,[659] Loughran and Russell's self-study on teacher education reform,[660] and Mitchell and Weber's[661] self-study on the arts. Likewise, Cheryl Craig[662] also points to earlier self-studies such as Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell's[663] self-study on educational programs in the Netherlands. Evidently, Zeichner's criticism of self-study as a primarily methodological based discipline is unwarranted.

In addition to the connection of self-study to knowledge construction, Zeichner[664] posits that self-study researchers need to form connections across self-studies to impact educational practices. According to Zeichner, it is difficult to make connections across self-studies because there is an inconsistency in terms throughout the methodology. Because of this discrepancy, Zeichner questions how self-study can move beyond relevancy for the self and towards benefits for self-study researchers across the field. Samaras and Freese[665] address this concern as they point to the importance of belonging to a community of self-study researchers. In this community, self-study researchers make

themselves vulnerable as they intricately share their individual self-study in an effort to look for common themes that emerge across the methodology. Samaras and Freese discuss guiding criteria for self-study research that is common in the self-study community.

> "Self-study builds on the personal processes of reflection and inquiry, and takes these processes and makes them open to public critique. Self-study is not done in isolation, but rather requires collaboration for building new understandings through dialogue and the validation of findings. Self-study research requires openness and vulnerability since the focus is on the self. And finally, self-study is designed to lead to the reframing and reconceptualization of the role of the teacher." [666]

There is common terminology across the self-study methodology that develops as a community of self-study researchers focus on building a strong, guiding methodology that focuses on improving teaching and learning.

Many scholars may view my project with contempt as an irrational subjective navel-gazing discourse. As I acknowledge this criticism, I will explicitly focus on Paul Edwards, originally Paul Eisenstein,[667] who is infamously known as an editor of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.[668] I will specifically focus on Edwards because his scholarship helped to shape the New Atheist Movement[669] that advocates against religious epistemology. Edwards, like many scholars of the New Atheist Movement, argued for rationalism, materialism, and logic throughout his philosophical career. Philosophers such as Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, David Hume, Bertrand Russell, and Wilhelm Reich influenced Edwards.[670]

Edwards viewed Kierkegaard's work as a point of departure for Heidegger. Edwards believes that Kierkegaard and Heidegger contribute to an illogical system of

thought.[671] However, it is possible that Edwards'[672] life experiences coupled with his lack of faith in a Supreme Being significantly differs from the life experiences of Heidegger and Kierkegaard. Edwards was born in Austria, which was annexed by Nazi Germany. His parents, who believed in Judaism, sent Edwards to Scotland before the family moved to Australia. They changed the family surname from "Eisenstein" to Edwards to avoid anti-Semitism. It is possible that Edwards' religious epistemological stance was impossible for him to comprehend. How could a Supreme Being allow the attempt of evil people to engage in genocide of faithful Jewish individuals?

Edwards may believe that a Supreme Being does not exist because a just Supreme Being would not allow the genocide of innocent humans. There is no simple answer to this unfortunate question from a philosophical and religious lens. However, I can say that the attempted genocide of Jewish individuals was unsuccessful. Many Jewish synagogues maintain a strong faith-based religious epistemological stance based on Judaism, despite the horror of anti-Semitism. When our faith is tested, we must remain strong to destroy evil and restore goodness. Instead of pursuing a comprehension of religious epistemology, Edwards spent his life arguing against it, probably due to the trauma that he experienced as a young boy in a Jewish home where his identity was forever changed literally and metaphorically because of anti-Semitism.

Like Reich,[673] Edwards believes religion isolates people from the natural world. This is what occurred when the Nazis claimed that only one universal religion should dominate the human race. Consequently, this might be a large part of the reason why Edwards has an almost instinctual dislike for organized religion. Regardless of the

reasons, Edwards motivates scholars such as Daniel Dennett,[674] Christopher Hitchens,[675] and Richard Dawkins[676] of The New Atheism movement who continue to advocate for a disbelief in religious epistemological systems.

I do not aim to impose a religious epistemological system of any kind onto the abovementioned scholars. On the contrary, I aim to understand how their epistemological framework develops and contributes to the morality of humanity. While I am a faith-based Hindu who believes in religious epistemology, I also see the need to understand non-faith-based frameworks that aim to prevent moral decay. What I am suggesting is that atheists and agonists may maintain a moral stance that does not develop based on religion. For me, Hinduism is much more than a ritualistic religion, but rather Hinduism is a way of life. Therefore, it is quite possible that the abovementioned scholars adhere to a religious way of life, from my perspective, in terms of morality although they abhor organized religion. Regardless, there should not be a battle between believers and non-believers in an effort to find the truth, but rather it is imperative to aim to understand, with an open perspective, how we each develop our philosophical stances based on our own experiences.

*Implications*

There is an urgency to engage in pedagogy, regardless of the academic discipline, with sensitivity to religion and culture in mind. If we fail as scholars to acknowledge the presence of the legacy of colonizing ideologies embedded in education, then we fail to bring forth a genuine respect and appreciation for religion and culture. A postcolonial focus is especially poignant because colonizing legacies still have the ability to create

injustices, albeit masked through an educative process. Thus, a postcolonial lens helps to maintain a much-needed emphasis that challenges educators to examine the need to employ a de-Orientalized pedagogy to address the injustices of colonizing ideologies.

Educators are vulnerable when teaching curriculums of which they do not have de-Orientalized knowledge. Yet, it is imperative to engage in a de-Orientalized pedagogy that aims to comprehend the intention of primary sources as opposed to Orientalized sources. I urge educators who teach about Hinduism to examine Hindu scriptures with faith-based Hindus to understand the lens of Hindus rather than impose an Orientalized framework onto sacred Hindu scriptures. I am thankful to my colleagues who invite me to present and dance for their classes and campus as we engage in a de-Orientalized pedagogy to teach about Hinduism. While my colleagues may not be scholars of Hindu dance, they still employ Hindu dance as a pedagogical tool during our collaboration. We engage in the teaching and learning process together in an effort to foster interreligious and inter-cultural relations.

From my on-going self-study, I can make some initial conclusions about using a de-Orientalized pedagogy to educate non-Hindus through the medium of Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance when I collaborate with my colleagues. First, it is imperative for my colleagues and I to build a de-Orientalized framework of Hinduism to position Hinduism with postcolonial realities in mind. To accomplish this, my colleagues and I engage in intellectual conversations through in-person meetings, phone connections, email, and sometimes even video chat. Here, I aim to understand the position of my colleagues and help them to understand me as a faith-based Hindu.

Second, it is crucial for me to engage in the readings that my colleagues assign to their classes. This helps me to confront the presence of Orientalism in the literature, which I then incorporate into my class presentation. Overall, I aim to share my phenomenological experience with my colleagues and their classes in an effort to shed light on Hinduism as much more than religion but rather as a way of being in the world. I hope I will form relationships with many more colleagues as I aim to share my phenomenological experience broadly in a global capacity in an effort to de-Orientalize Hinduism.

As I engage in de-Orientalized pedagogy, I ask multicultural educators to reevaluate multicultural dance pedagogy. First, it is essential to rethink the terms "multicultural" and "intercultural" from a postcolonial perspective. Next, I ask multicultural educators to build a de-Orientalized framework of religion and culture before teaching about religion and culture through dance. It is important to understand the traditions of religion and culture to prevent disrespectful misrepresentations that foster misconceptions. Then, I ask dance educators to nurture a de-Orientalized newness that develops in the pedagogical space of hybridity.

*Future Research*

In the future, I hope to geographically extend my self-study of how I use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to educate non-Hindus with postcolonialism in mind. I would like to grasp the opportunity to present in other parts of the nation. This will present many new challenges regarding the traveling with a sacred costume and religious objects. In addition, I may realize that cultures vary from region to region

despite the umbrella of our nation. I suspect that new pedagogical challenges and concerns may arise in my self-study, which I must confront before I teach.

As I continue with my self-study research, I feel inspired to think about how to use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance to educate Hindus about Hinduism with postcolonialism in mind. The Orientalist legacy moved the ancient form of Hindu dance to a Westernized Eastern dance form. Many Hindus have come to believe in Hindu dance as a performance art that enriches the tradition, but does not maintain a sacred core. Several Hindu-based dance schools move Hindu dance to a Western educational system that dismisses the sacred ethic and traditional religious-educational system of Hindu dance. For this reason, I consider it necessary to move to de-Orientalize Hinduism through Hindu dance among Hindus.

Overall, I aim to move past the illusionary boundaries of the West and the East as I acknowledge the diasporic nature of cultures. I hope to use Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance pedagogically to educate individuals about Hinduism with close attention to postcolonial realities. Although the term “Hinduism” refers to a particular religion, the term cloaks the humanitarian way of life that Hinduism embraces. Hinduism is one path of humanitarianism up the mountain that leads to eternal bliss. There are several religions and secular modes of living that embrace different epistemological frameworks. Based on my epistemological framework that is influenced by Hinduism, I hope to stimulate philosophical inquiry through Hindu dance to think about what it means to live as a human in the world. I embrace a faith-based Hindu epistemological framework that I develop through Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance as my road up the mountain

towards moksha because I aim to fulfill my purpose as a human on earth. I hope to share this with non-Hindus, invite non-Hindus to meet with me in a sensitive hybrid space, and embrace non-Hindu religious and secular epistemological frameworks. To conclude this ongoing project, that really does not have an end, I offer these questions:

Who are you? Who are we?

Where do you come from? Where do we come from?

Where are you going? Where are we going?

Appendix A Pedagogical Spaces

| Pedagogical Space | Pedagogical Concerns | Contemplative Practices |
|---|---|---|
| ***Overlapping: Mostly Classroom Spaces***<br>Said (1978) indicates that the East and the West overlap. In the overlapping pedagogical space, I am both Eastern and Western. | East and West overlap<br>Knowledge development<br>Epistemological Frameworks<br>Dialogical Discussions<br>Usage of the Socratic Method<br>Vulnerability to Orientalists<br>Philosophizing | Inter-being – 15-30 minute dressing in a "practice" dress<br>Brief Prayer: Sacred Space Subjective<br>Namaskaram<br>Phenomenology during the dance<br>Ethical thinking<br>Moksha |
| ***Hybridity: Mostly Lecture spaces***<br>Hybridity is essentially a creative space where cultures blend to produce something *new* as these cultures reinvent themselves. Homi Bhabha (1994) explains that the East and the West merge with each other in an intentional, hybrid space that is dependent upon negotiating cultural goals and ways of achieving those goals. | False dichotomy<br>Illusionary boundaries<br>Dangers of creativity to misrepresent religions and cultures<br>Knowledge development<br>Epistemological Frameworks<br>Question and Answer<br>Vulnerability to Orientalists<br>Very Faith-based although not proselytizing<br>Phenomenology | Inter-being – 1-2 hours dressing in sacred costume, hair ornaments, jewels<br>Care for the sacred costume, hair ornaments, and jewels<br>Brief Prayer in a Physical Sacred Space<br>Murtis<br>Music for entrance and exit to create a faith-based aura<br>Namaskaram<br>Phenomenology during the dance<br>Moral thinking<br>Moksha |
| ***Mirroring: Mostly Theatrical Spaces***<br>Ashis Nandy (2002, 1983) explains that the East mirrors the West and vice versa. This mirror creates an illusory image because even if we think religion and culture is compartmentalized into neat spheres, the messiness of global politics is always present not just *within* each separate sphere but *among and between* these spheres. | Colonized mirrors Colonizers<br>Knowledge development<br>Epistemological Frameworks<br>Perceptions<br>Assumptions<br>Self-Interpretation based on pedagogy<br>Phenomenology | Preparation of Sacred Space, Stage, Lobby<br>Inter-being – 2-3 hours dressing in sacred costume, hair ornaments, jewels<br>Care for the sacred costume, hair ornaments, and jewels<br>Vegans backstage; Sacred Hindu |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Space<br>- Puja on Stage before curtains open<br>- Namaskaram<br>- Teach using visual clips to introduce myself before each dance<br>- Phenomenology during the dance<br>- Faith-based<br>- Moral thinking<br>- Moksha |

Appendix B Self-Study Data

| Journal Entry | Theme One: Pedagogical Spaces | Theme Two: Hindu Metaphysics | Theme Three: Gazes | Theme Four: Genre of Literature | Theme Five: Religious Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Date and Journal Name) | | | | | |

| Journal Entry | Theme One: Pedagogical Spaces |
|---|---|
| (Date and Journal Name) | |

Theme One: Pedagogical Spaces

| Journal Entry | Theme One: Pedagogical Spaces Subtheme: Classroom Spaces |
|---|---|
| (Date and Journal Name) | |

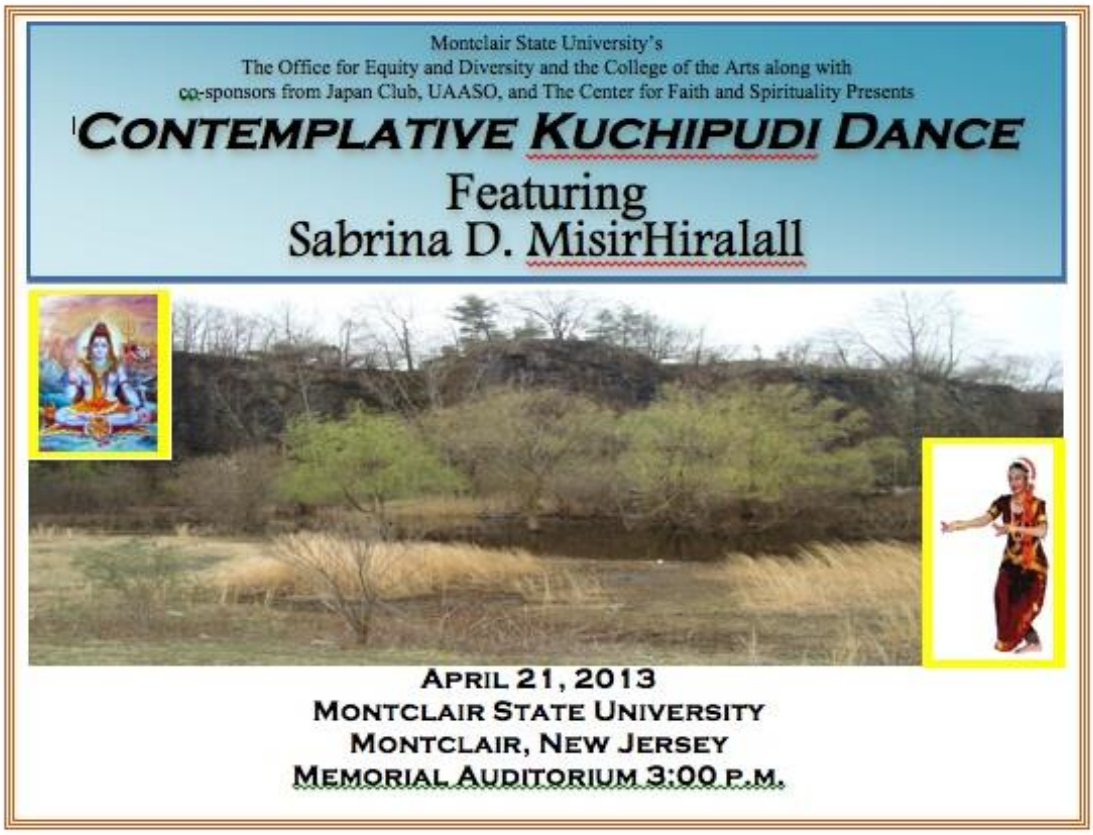
| Journal Entry | Theme One: Pedagogical Spaces Subtheme: Conference Spaces |
|---|---|
| (Date and Journal Name) | |

| Journal Entry | Theme One: Pedagogical Spaces Subtheme: Lecture Spaces |
|---|---|
| (Date and Journal Name) | |

| Journal Entry | Theme One: Pedagogical Spaces Subtheme: Theatrical |
|---|---|

| | Spaces |
|---|---|
| (Date and Journal Name) | |

Appendix C Contemplative Kuchipudi Dance Program



## PROGRAM

| *Program Item* | *Time Length (Minutes)* |
|---|---|
| Greetings from Montclair State University | 5:00 |
| Namastee: Welcome Visual Clip | 1:27 |
| Pushpanjali and Devi Kritti Visual Clip | 4:05 |
| **Pushpanjali and Devi Kritti Dance** | 10:31 |
| Tillana Visual Clip | 6:02 |
| **Tillana Dance** | 14:14 |
| INTERMISSION | 10:00 |
| Tarangam Visual Clip | 17:35 |
| **Tarangam Dance** | 33:49 |
| Mangalam Visual Clip | 4:23 |
| **Mangalam "Jai Shiva Omkara" Dance** | 4:43 |
| Vote of Thanks | 5:00 |
| Hari Sundara Nanda Mukunda Visual Clip | 10:25 |
| **Hari Sundara Nanda Mukunda Dance** | 7:00 |

**Pushpanjali and Devi Kritti**

The dancer offers flowers to God. The dancer seeks the protection of God as the dancer asks God to manifest into different forms to protect the stage. The dancer also seeks the blessings of the Gurus, or teachers, and the audience. This Pushpanjali goes on to describe Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Lord Shiva. Ganesha clears the path of obstacles with his elephant trunk. This Pushpanjali is followed by a Devi Kritti, which seeks the blessings of the feminine form of God in Hinduism. The dancer seeks the blessings of Mother Durga, the powerful form of femininity, Mother Lakshmi, the giver of wealth, prosperity, and beauty, and Mother Saraswati, the musically inclined feminine form of God in Hinduism. The dancer describes the beauty of the three goddesses. Essentially, the dancer seeks to bring heaven to earth through the blessings of the goddesses as the dancer embarks on the journey of the performance.

### CONTEMPLATIVE CONCEPT INTERCONNECTEDNESS

- Do you feel that you are interconnected with this performance?
- Do you feel that you are interconnected with the world?
- What are the multiple dimensions of interconnectedness?
- How does this contribute to our epistemology of how we know what we know?
- What does this mean for life inside and outside of academia?

**Tillana**

This dance is a composition of Shri Balamurali Krishna set to Raga Brindavana Saranga and Tala Adi. One component of Tillana is Nritta, pure dance that occurs when the dancer dances with rhythmic movement and statue-like poses. While the dance movements may seem meaningless, the dancer phenomenologically gives meaning to the dance as the dancer adorns the body with ornaments and listens to melodious instruments. Another component of Tillana aside from Nritta or pure dance is the Sahityam, which are the lyrics near the end of the dance. The lyrics of this Tillana are dedicated to Shri Krishna, a Hindu incarnation of God. The lyrics describe Krishna's flute. The sound of Krishna's flute brings peace to the cows, peacocks, snakes, and the Gopikas (milkmaids). The dancer seeks to unite the Jivatma (individual soul) with the Paramatma (universal soul) of Krishna by surrendering the ego.

**CONTEMPLATIVE CONCEPT**
**CARE FOR THE SELF AND LETTING GO OF THE SELF**

- Are there times when we need to acknowledge the self with care both physically and mentally?
- Are there times when we need to let go of the self?
- If so, how do we know when we are in a safe space to let go of the self?
- How would we let go of the self?

**Tarangam**

The great Hindu saint, Narayana Theerta, wrote the great *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini* as a Sanskrit dance opera based on the *Bhagavatam*, an ancient Hindu scripture, by Ved Vyasa. While Krishna doesn't explicitly destroy the physical demons during his boyhood pranks, Krishna implicitly shows us how to battle our inner demons. *Kam* (lust), *Krodh* (rage), *Lobh* (greed), *Moh* (attachment) and *Ahankar* (ego) have the potential to be vices that we must battle. The second part of Tarangam focuses on a dance meditation. The dancer balances a pot of water on the head and also dances on the rims of a brass plate as a medium of meditation.

**CONTEMPLATIVE CONCEPT**
**BHAKTI**

Bhakti is a phenomenological state of divine bliss that occurs when an individual feels an intense sense of love caused because of devotion.

- What is the connection between love and devotion in a state of Bhakti?
- Assuming that love and devotion are universal concepts, then how could a state of Bhakti develop in a secular context?
- Have you ever experienced a state of Bhakti where you feel an intense sense of divine love because of your devotion?

**Mangalam**

The dancer seeks the blessings of and gives thanks to God, the Gurus (or teachers), the audience, and Mother Earth. For the Mangalam dance, the dancer will dance an excerpt from *Jai Shiva Omkara*, which is a traditional Hindu hymn written by the great Swami Shivananda. Earlier, the dancer asked One God to manifest in different forms to protect the dancer and guard the performance. Now, the dancer asks the many Gods who have emerged to protect the dancer and guard the performance to return back as part of the One Supreme Being.

**CONTEMPLATIVE CONCEPT**
**ONE AND THE MANY**

- Do you believe that there is One entity of the universe? If so, then who or what is the One?
- Do you believe that there are Many aspects of the universe? If so, then who or what are the Many?
- In Hinduism, many emerge from One and then many also merge back to One. What would you say this emerging from and merging to means when we think of the concept of the One and the Many?

**Hari Sundara Nanda Mukunda**

Informal Hindu dancers and live musicians join together with me to share a communal sentiment of Hinduism through song and dance.

*Hari Sundara Nanda Mukunda*
Oh Krishna, you are so beautiful.
*Hari Narayana Hari Om.*
You are a part of one Supreme Divine Being.
*Hari Keshava Hari Govinda*
You herded cows during your boyhood days.
*Hari Narayana Hari Om.*
You are a part of one Supreme Divine Being.

*Kannmali Murali Dhari*
You play the flute.
*Govardhana Girivara Dhari*
During the great flood, you lifted the Govardhan Mountain on your pinky finger to provide shelter to the villagers.
*Nita Nita Kara Makhana Chori, Gopi Mana Hari*
You love to eat sweet butter. The Gopikas love you.

*Aao Re Gaa Re Gokula Ka Pyaari*
Come. Let's sing to the love of the village of Gokul.
*Aao Re Kandha Re Gokula Ka Pyaari*
Come Kandha (Krishna) to us just as you did to the villagers of Gokul.
*Gaa Re Nacho Re Raasa Rachaya Re*
Let's sing and dance together just as Krishna did in the Rass Leela dance.

**CONTEMPLATIVE CONCEPT**
**EXPERIENCE**

- Did you have a phenomenological experience?
- Was it a religious experience, a spiritual experience, a mystical experience, or maybe an aesthetic experience?

## About Sabrina D. MisirHiralall

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Sabrina D. MisirHiralall is a doctoral candidate in the *Pedagogy and Philosophy* program at Montclair State University. Sabrina's dissertation focuses on how she uses Kuchipudi Indian classical dance to educate non-Hindus about Hinduism with postcolonial realities in mind.

Through the guidance of her dance guru, Sabrina completed her *RangaPravesam*, which means to "ascend the stage." The *RangaPravesam* marked the start of Sabrina's dance career. She had the lead role in *Krishnaprasam* and holds the title of *Natya Tilakam*, which was given to her by her dance guru, Smt. Sadhana Paranji.

Sabrina taught second grade in Bayonne, NJ and also worked as a consultant for New Jersey City University's Striving Readers Grant. Also at NJCU, Sabrina taught undergraduate education classes, supervised student teachers, and taught graduate students of the NOYCE fellowship program. She teaches Philosophy part-time at Middlesex County Community College.

Sabrina lectures and dances in Religious Studies classes at universities, and at conferences. She is an active Board Member of the Society for the Study of Women Philosophers and an active member of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society and the Religion and Education SIG group of the American Education Research Association. In addition, Sabrina is the current Graduate Student Representative of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion.

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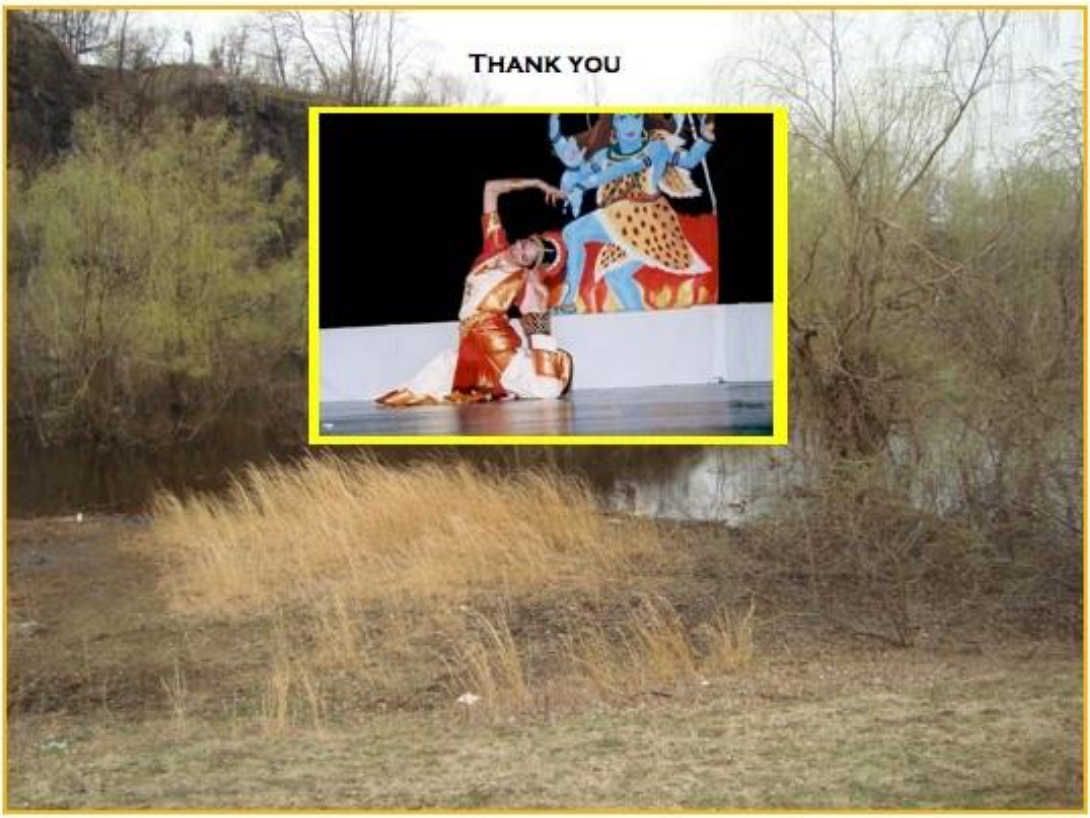
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[388] In this instance, the term Mata is used to refer to the Cosmic Mother.
[389] This term is problematic to translate. A pandit is similar to a priest, minister, or pastor. A pandit is a religious leader in Hinduism who officiates pujas (religious worship) and guides devotees through spiritual counsel.
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