

ABSTRACT

Divine Connections: An Examination of the Relationship between the Sacred and the Profane in Trinidad's Kali Mai Puja

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This study investigates the complex relationship between the sacred and profane in Trinidad's Kali Mai Puja. I explore said relationship through the lived experiences of practitioners and devotees at the Jai Kali Shakti Mandir in Pasea, Tunapuna. Ethnographic research (including interviews and participant observation) was conducted over a two year period at the site. Through a combination of narrative descriptions and discussion, I interrogate the arising themes of purity, pollution, purification, consecration and gender. I also address issues of identity, body and ritual practice, as well as ideas of the taboo. In addition, I am able to address issues of gender disparities and the healing economy while discussing the complex idea of trance mediumship. This study uncovers the extent to which aspects of the sacred can transform elements of the profane and vice versa, adding to the existing discourse on Caribbean popular religions.

Keywords: Indo-Caribbean folk religion; Kali Mai Puja; Hindu ritual; Kali Mai Puja Trinidad.