



HINDU DIASPORA IN MAURITIUS: EXPLORING THE CULTURAL DYNAMICS IN ANANDA DEVI'S *PAGLI*

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Abstract

Ananda Devi is an acclaimed Francophone Mauritian writer whose militant writing attempts to dismantle the hierarchical social structures. Thanks to her mother who hails from Andhra Pradesh, Devi has been profoundly influenced by the Indian customs and traditions. The cultural, religious, and mythological influences are richly portrayed in her novel *Pagli* which is set in the milieu of Mauritius. This research paper seeks to examine the rituals, customs, and traditions of the Indian diaspora that assert their Hindu ethnic identity in Mauritius. The reconstruction of the Indian flavours in the island of Mauritius enables the Hindu community to maintain their diasporic links with their Motherland.

Keywords: diaspora, indianness, ethnicity, homeland.

Introduction

Ananda Devi, a Francophone writer was born at Trois-Boutiques in the island of Mauritius. Of Andhra Pradesh descent, she belongs to the Indian diaspora in Mauritius and currently lives in Ferney-Voltaire closeby Geneva. Mauritius becomes the backdrop of most of Devi's novels which focus on the exploitation of the female body in the patriarchal world in Mauritius and India. Ananda Devi is a rebellious feminist writer who aims to disrupt patriarchal ideologies to liberate the female body from heterosexual violence.

It is stunning that Devi gives an in-depth examination of the Indian traditions, rituals, myths, beliefs, cuisine, and epics in her narratives since she had seldom visited India. Though her roots are in Mauritius, the elements of Indianness interwoven with the narratives are distinct and remarkable. She confesses in an interview entitled *Peut-être est-ce*

l'Inde mythique qui m'habite that "India is intimately involved with me, with my mind. I know it in a deep way ... Or maybe it's the mythical India that dwells in me ... some of my novels are 'Indian' in their subject matter". Devi also declares in an interview with Patrick Sultan : " For a long time, India's part was very important in my writing and cultural, religious, and mythological references are abundant".

Devi discloses that she has grown up listening to the Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and other mythologies from her mother which have consciously and unconsciously influenced her despite being born and bred in Mauritius. India is a country which is profoundly attached to Ananda Devi and her thoughts. As such, her novels offer a fertile ground for exploring cultural elements of the Hindu diasporic community in Mauritius. Investigating the fluid and powerful writings of the renowned writer can be an insightful

research into the question of Indian ethnic identity in the Mauritian society.

Analysis:

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam state that “it is customary to define diaspora as the voluntary or involuntary dispersion of a social or ethnic group. Diaspora studies therefore look for the stability or discontinuity of the identity of individuals or groups from their origins to their present location” (2003: 193). Though deterritorialized, the customary beliefs, traditions, religious rituals, dressing habits, systems of language and communication, cuisine, music, art, values and conventions of the community’s origins define their cultural identity. This research paper seeks to explore the cultural dynamics of the Hindu diasporic community in Mauritius in Ananda Devi’s *Pagli*. The author delves into the Indian culture in her novel *Pagli* to establish a reconnection with India, her ancestral homeland.

Mauritius, an island in the Indian ocean, is a former sugar plantation colony popularly known as ‘Little India’. A large number of Indians migrated to Mauritius during [British India as indentured labourers](#) or ‘coolies’ to work in the [sugarcane](#) fields. Mauritius has no indigenous population but became a melting pot where the descendants of French colonial settlers, Indian indentured labourers, African slaves, and Chinese traders cohabit. The island is a hybrid space where all communities incorporate cultural elements from other groups in harmony. Despite their coexistence, the groups established their space, language, religion, and ancestral culture in the host country. Mauritius is a multicultural and multilingual country. Mauritians speak English, French, Creole, and ethnic languages like Hindi, Bhojpuri, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and Urdu.

Hindus of Indian origin is the dominant community in Mauritius. The Hindus of Bhojpuri, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, and Marathi descent migrated to Mauritius with their culture, traditions, religions, languages, beliefs, and castes. The Indian indentured labourers who have settled in Mauritius were haunted by the nostalgia of their Indian homeland that they had quit. They had the urge to reconnect with their *Bharat Mata*. Movindri Reddy

affirms that “they recreated and established rituals, customs, and traditions that are novel to the island but nevertheless have connections, however weak, to India” (2016 :153). Little by little, Hindu customs and values established its roots in Mauritius. Indo-Mauritians identified India as ‘Mother India’, their sacred land of origin. Julia Waters asserts :

Since their arrival in Mauritius, Indo-Mauritians and particularly Hindu Mauritians have been able to assert a strong sense of collective ethnic belonging by maintaining diasporic links with Mother India (2018 : 4).

Hindu Mauritians have preserved their ancestral cultural practices and languages to establish connections with their homeland. Many Indian festivals like Holi, Diwali, Maha Shivaratri, Thaipooan, Cavadee, Ganesh Chaturthi, Durga Puja, Ramanavami, Ganesh Chaturthi, and Ugadi are celebrated in Mauritius with a lot of fervour. Daily rites of worship are observed in homes and temples with devotion. This bears testimony to the extent of influence of Hindu culture in Mauritius. Patrick Eisenlohr states :

Hindu Mauritians who comprise the largest and politically dominant ethnic community of Mauritius have legitimized their central place in a Mauritian nation not in terms of an imagined state of indigenusness but by the construction of diasporic ancestral cultures (2006:5).

This is poignant while exploring Devi’s novels where the Indo-Mauritian community idealise the ancestral culture and exhibit an excessive attachment to their homeland. Ananda Devi’s *Pagli* revolves around the Hindu Mauritian woman, Daya who defies social norms and rejects her husband harbouring hostile feelings against him. Her husband is her cousin who had raped her during her adolescence. Nurturing her vengeance, she desecralises the institution of marriage and the rituals of the Hindu culture to express her rebellion against her husband, the perpetrator who had desecralised her body. Daya’s life is shattered by the trauma of rape but enlivened by the discovery of extramarital love with Zil, a Creole fisherman. Daya is ostracized by the Hindu community and locked in

a chicken shed for establishing an extramarital affair with Zil. She is entombed alive for overriding the Hindu cultural norms which are sacred in Mauritius. It is in this context that I seek to examine how Devi knits the narration with the Hindu cultural elements that have been imported to Mauritius from India.

Ananda Devi offers an insight into the diverse elements of Hindu culture which is founded upon the sacred scriptures of the Vedas, the Puranas, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata that epitomize the cultural heritage of the Hindu people. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions that originated in India. The migrant Hindus revere 'Mother India' and cherish their values, religious rituals and cultural practices. Hindu cultural references are manifold in Devi's novels.

Ananda Devi makes a constant reference to the banyan tree in her novels as she had been fascinated by this tree since her childhood. In an interview *L'écriture est le monde, elle est le chemin et le but: entretien avec Ananda Devi*, she expresses: "What does it represent to me? A maternal space, perhaps? In *Pagli*, it is the place of love of *Pagli* and *Zil* the banyan is an autonomous universe, with its cycle of birth and death, and its unwavering vitality." The banyan tree is the national tree of India and holds cultural significance. People paint the trunk of the tree with sandal paste and worship with flowers. In ancient Indian texts and scriptures, the huge banyan tree symbolizes the Creator and Mother, the source of comfort and nourishment. The banyan tree is believed to represent the Trimurti of cosmic creation – Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The immense tree whose roots grow upwards and branches grow downwards is associated to the Universe and considered as the symbol of longevity and immortality.

Devi who has always been attached intimately to Hindu mythology showcases the Banyan tree as the source of love and comfort nurturing all creatures beneath its expansive arms. The magnificent tree with its rooted branches represents the maternal space to Daya when she revels in the love of Zil. The banyan tree also becomes the protector of Daya when she is expelled from the Hindu community. Despite attributing

divinity and religiosity to the banyan tree, Indian mythology narrates that banyan trees are possessed by ghosts which hang upside down on their branches. Devi seems to have incorporated this image in *Pagli* when Daya expresses that "some of them, the most vociferous tell about hanging me in the highest branch of the banyan tree and letting my body sway..." (Devi 2001 : 14). The novel is a monologue wherein Daya mocks at the vociferous guardians of the Hindu culture who await to hang her body in the banyan tree for violating the rigorous laws established for women by the Hindu community.

Daya maintains her stoicism and continues to express her resistance against the rigid norms of the Hindu community. She disrupts the orderly home and makes the kitchen cluttered and messy. She rattles the pots and pans making a stormy noise and burns the rice and lentils. She finds delight in the disorder that she creates in her marital home. She rejects not only the kitchen but also the traditional gender roles constructed by patriarchy. It is in this context that Devi introduces traditional Indian food where Daya prepares rice and ghee for the family. Devi also introduces Indian food during Daya's wedding ceremony. Daya states "They ... bring more food, more sweets, a glut of dhal, purees, *bread songe*, potato curry, chutneys, laddoos, gulap jamoon, kheer ..." (Devi 2007 : 84).

Hindu Mauritians affirmed their love for the ancestral home through food. Indian food is extensive on Mauritius. Mauritian cuisine is a blend of Indian, African, and Chinese cuisines which the immigrants brought with them to the island. Food evokes nostalgic emotions for the Hindu diaspora. The Hindu Mauritians associate themselves with their homeland through Indian cuisine. Food creates a feel and touch of the ancestral home and becomes a tool to anchor cultural identity. Indo-Mauritians preserve their traditional foods to assert their belonging to 'Mother India'.

Movindri Reddy's ideas are pertinent to our examination of Hindu cultural identity in Mauritius. He states:

Throughout the diaspora, food maintains some continuities with the regional cuisine of

India ... Food is also used to signify ethnic otherness – diaspora Indians are associated with chutney, masala, chai, channa, and so on. It emphasizes the connectedness to India but also recognizes their presence in a place outside India. Food works to add depth and flavor to the indentured Indian placement in the transnational identity (2016 : 154, 155).

Dhall, purees, potato curry, chutneys, laddoos, gulab jamoon, and kheer are delicious Indian foods that linger in the taste buds. In India, ghee is a superfood widely used for preparing sweets and curries for its rich taste, aroma, and goodness. Ghee is clarified butter which is churned by hand, melted, and served hot to enhance the taste of Indian food. Hindu Mauritians include ghee into their cooking. Ghee is also used for performing Indian rituals as it is spiritually very pure, fragrant, and attracts positive vibrations. Ghee is also used for lighting diyas in homes and temples to render festivals, ceremonies, and functions auspicious.

To express her rebellion against the phallogocentric rules, Daya attempts to bring more misery and disorder to the clean marital home. Daya caresses a beggar whom she meets at her doorstep and invites her home. The beggar woman relaxes on the sofa and amuses with the velvet cushions. Daya offers her a sumptuous meal which she gobbles to her heart's content. With agony and fury, Daya plays the rituals of the wedding ceremony with the beggar woman. She enrobes her with her red wedding sari and places the *sindoor* on her forehead in order to mock the sanctity of the social institution of marriage. Her husband's family is horrified and offended by this outrageous act as Daya revels in her disregard of cultural laws. The family members despise Daya for toppling the Hindu rituals and beliefs. They chase the beggar out and scrub the home with detergents and bleach to erase the traces of the untouchable and purify the home.

This scene throws light on the existence of caste system in India where untouchables or Dalits, the lowest in the Hindu hierarchy, bear the brunt of oppression, discrimination, and violence. Hindu society is constructed on the basis of caste system. Traditional Hindus treated the untouchables as

impure and shunned them. They were isolated as untouchables and excluded from the social organization. The untouchables were forbidden to enter the streets of the upper classes and temples. They were also forbidden to dine with the upper caste men. Dieter Neubert affirms that “ the “Hindus”, the simplified term for Indo-Mauritians, divide themselves according to language, region of origin in India, and religion. For the religious Hindu, castes are also a marker of difference.” (2019 :146).

Having preserved their roots, the Hindus adhere to the caste system in Mauritius. Caste system is entrenched in the social structure of Mauritius. In the process of reconstructing their connection with their homeland, the Hindus upheld the pride of caste system. It is the manifestation of their traditional culture and affirmation of their cultural identity and community. Daniel Bass affirms:

Caste still matters among diasporic Indians, not just as cultural vestiges but as deeply meaningful aspects of community and identity (2013 : 30).

Daya also becomes an untouchable because her body has been touched and caressed by a man other than her husband. She declares: “I was the untouchable. Because I had been touched ” (Devi 2001 : 111). Daya breaks the marital vows of fidelity and chastity and becomes a curse to her husband and in-laws. They attack her, thrash and drag her by the hair as Daya is no longer chaste and virtuous. She is left to die with no food or water.

The next cultural element of the Hindu diaspora is the Hindu name assigned in the Hindu Mauritian community. The protagonist of the novel, Daya is a Hindu name. Being born in a Hindu family, she is given a Hindu name by her parents. Ananda Devi is conscious that in the Mauritian society, Hindu communities assigned traditional Hindu names to their children. Indian children, born in Mauritius, were given Indian names (Watson :158).

Daya is beaten brutally and locked in a chicken shed for establishing an extramarital affair with the Creole fisherman. It is not only the question of tarnishing the Hindu codes of conduct but also the

issue of establishing a relationship with a guy of lower status. Daya is almost beaten to death and labeled *Pagli*. 'Pagli' is a Hindi word which is translated as mad woman. Devi employs several Hindi words used during rituals and ceremonies. During her wedding, Daya tells : " I looked at the traces of *haldi* on my arms" (Devi 2007 : 81). *Haldi* is a Hindi word which is turmeric. Daya also tells : " He placed the red *tikka* on my forehead" (Devi 2001: 75). *Tikka* is a Hindi word which refers to the mark or the paste placed on the forehead by Hindu women. The influence of Hindi in the Indo-Mauritian society is noteworthy. Hindi as the language of the ancestors is related to the diasporic situation of Hindus in Mauritius, establishing a relationship between Hindus in the diaspora and the homeland (Eisenlohr 2006 : 52). Hindi symbolized the cultural attachment of the Hindu Mauritian to their Motherland. The diasporic belonging to India is reconstructed through the ancestral language. As Bhikhu Parekh et al state that "religion and language are the most tangible markers of cultural identity" (2003 : 29).

Indo-Mauritians asserted their sacred attachment to India through Hindi and propagated their language to boost the spirit of Indianness in their community and to cultivate the language amongst their children. They wished to have a firm hold of their ancestral language. As Patrick Eisenlohr states that " the generous support enjoyed by Hindi as an ancestral language ... is a source of pride for many Hindus in northern Mauritius" (2006 : 83). Their vigorous attachment to the language is also an expression of their resistance to other cultures in the host country. Devi writes in her thesis *Telugu Ethnic Identity in Mauritius*:

In 1981, Hindi was given one hour daily on television and two-weekly full-length feature films, and approximately 26 hours ... a regular Tamil feature film on T.V on the grounds that they represented one eighth of the Indo – Mauritian Community (1982 :146).

This shows how Hindi took shape and became a primary focus in Mauritius.

In *Pagli*, Devi also sheds light on the extravagant Hindu wedding that is celebrated with

pomp and show. The marriage is certainly the most spectacular manifestation of traditional Hindu customs and religious beliefs. Devi gives a meticulous description of Daya's marriage to show the exuberance of the Hindu culture and the rich Indian heritage. Hindu weddings are celebrated with colourful costumes and elaborate rituals that extend for three to four days. Oddvar Hollup emphasizes that in Mauritius "the celebration of marriage is central to the internal dynamics of group maintenance ... which is celebrated for three days" (2000 : 231). He reiterates that a collective identity is reproduced through marriage" (2000 : 234).

Daya narrates : " They dressed me in red sari and gold and braided my hair and blackened my eyes with Kohl, placed jewels around my throat and arms and forehead" (2001 : 80). The atmosphere was boisterous with loud film songs and music, the laughter of men, and the endless sounds of cooking. Hindu wedding is a glittering affair. The bride is adorned from head to toe. The silk brocaded sari and dazzling jewellery speak volumes of the traditions of the Hindu wedding. The bride and the groom shine in their gorgeous outfits. The bride is basted in gold, diamond, and platinum ornaments - necklaces, chokers, dozens of bangles, dangling earrings, head pieces, finger and toe rings, nose rings, and anklets.

Daya continues the narration : " I looked at the traces of *haldi* on my arms" (Devi 2007: 81). The *haldi* ceremony is a popular Hindu pre-wedding ritual. It is an auspicious rite where the family members, friends, and guests apply turmeric paste on the cheeks, arms, and feet of the bride and the groom to shower their blessing. Hindus believed that the colour yellow is auspicious and brings long life and prosperity to the newlyweds. *Haldi* is known for its antiseptic and healing properties. It is also used as a cosmetic product to cleanse the skin. *Haldi* is also a significant ingredient in Indian cuisine.

Daya describes: " They dressed me in red and gold..." (Devi 2001 : 73). It is the custom of Hindu women to be clad in red sari during their weddings. In Hindu culture, red is an auspicious and sacred colour that symbolizes prosperity and fecundity. Tracy Pintchman observes that "one of the key colors of the sari worn during the wedding

ceremony, red also symbolizes the potential and actual power of sexuality" (2007: 91). 'Terre Rouge' which Devi evokes in her novel is symbolical of the colour red which is connected to the rituals of the Hindu marriage - blood, menstruation, and birth. Menstruation is associated to impurity according to the Hindu beliefs. Ananda Devi observes in the interview with Patrick Sultan that Hindu women are forbidden entry into temples during menstruation. She expresses that the association of menstruation and parturition to impurity is anchored in the Hindu traditions.

Daya sits down in front of the holy fire and the pandit begins to chant the prayers in Sanskrit. Hindu marriages are performed by Hindu pandits around a hearth of fire. It is the sacred fire lit with ghee, mango twigs and manure. According to Hindu mythology, fire is one of the five natural elements namely Earth (Prithvi), Water (Varuna), Fire (Agni), Air (Vayu), and Space (Akasha). These elements are the basis of cosmic creation and hence considered sacred. The most important ritual of the Hindu marriage is to invoke Agni, the God of Fire. The sacred fire is the representation of Agni and the wedding becomes sacrosanct. The bride and the groom exchange garlands and perform a ritual of walking around the fire while the pandit chants the mantras in Sanskrit to strengthen the marital bond.

Sanskrit is one of the oldest Indo-Aryan languages. Most of the Indian languages have their roots in Sanskrit. Knowledge of Sanskrit was a marker of social class in ancient India. Brahmins who belonged to the higher caste had the privilege to learn Sanskrit. This language has always been used by Hindu priests in rituals, hymns, and chants during religious ceremonies to invoke the celestial gods. Sanskrit is an intrinsic part of Hindu rituals. Hindus offered their daily prayers in Sanskrit. Hindu Mauritians preserve the chanting tradition in Sanskrit. Oddvar Hollup states that "language and religious practices (rituals and dieties worshipped) are important constituents of ethnic identity among the Hindus in Mauritius" (2000: 226).

The pandit adds more twigs and ghee to rise the fire; he requests Daya to pronounce her vows of fidelity and obedience to her husband. But Days

continues to challenge the Hindu culture by pronouncing her own turbulent vows and finds pleasure in her sabotage of Hindu rites. Listening to her furious incantation, the cousin and the pandit tremble with fear while throwing the rice and ghee in the hearth of fire. She violates the rituals that shatter her liberty, desire, and hope to exist. Daya and her cousin exchange garlands. Devi Nirsimloo Anenden argues that "traditionally, among Telugus as well as Tamils there has been a tendency towards cross-cousin marriages according to the prescribed marriage rule" (1982 : 234). She also states :

More ethnic categories in Mauritius retain their distinctiveness through religious traditions, languages, and by the fact that their members tend to marry within their respective ethnic groups. Endogamy perpetuates ethnic boundaries. Endogamy, marriage within the group, is one of the strongest identity-sustaining elements operative in Mauritian society (1982 : 235).

Daya declares during her wedding : " He placed the red *tikka* on my forehead" (Devi 2001 : 75). In the Hindu wedding, the groom applies a tikka, a red mark on the bride's forehead. The tikka is a sacred powder which signifies a woman's entry into her marital space. The red sindoor reminds the woman to be chaste and faithful to her husband and guards the sanctity of the institution of marriage. It is also believed to bring prosperity to the husband's home. According to the Hindu culture, the tikka is the third eye which can ward off an evil eye or bad omen. Hindu women place tikka on their foreheads in Mauritius. The Hindu Mauritians cherish and nourish their culture in the foreign land exposing their affinity to their ancestral home. The groom places the red tikka on Daya's forehead. The invitees and friends shower the flower petals on the married couple to bless them after which a sumptuous lunch is offered at home.

Daya tells : " They quickly remove the banana leaf, bring more food, more sweets, a glut of dhal, purees, *bred songe*, potato curry, chutneys, laddoos, gulap jamoon, kheer ... " (Devi 2007 : 84). A wedding or festive feast in India is traditionally served on banana leaves with fascinating combination of rice,

rotis, lentils, vegetables, dollops of curries, and sweets to rejoice. The banana leaves are rich in antioxidants and also have anti-bacterial properties that kill the germs in the food. These leaves are considered pure and sacred. This is the traditional Indian way of having food. In the evening, the multicolour electric lights decorate the walls of the home in 'Terre Rouge'.

Oddvar Hollup emphasizes the role played by marriage and kinship in the construction and reconstruction of Indian ethnic identity in Mauritius. He states: "Kinship and marriage bonds ... define 'Indianness' and constitute elements of ethnic identity (2000: 219). Devi Nirsimloo Anenden argues that kinship and marriage are the primordial elements in the constitution and maintenance of ethnic identity. She asserts that " kinship and marriage are complementary in serving to sustain and strengthen identity..." (1984: 45)

Daya exposes her pain entangled in the marital home. She expresses: "I had brought dishonour into this house". (2001 :111). During the nuptial ceremony, she screams and rubs the tikka on her forehead. She throws the wedding sari, jewellery, and garlands on the floor furiously. She terrorizes her husband by tearing the sacred attire to shreds, breaking the jewellery, and trampling the garland. By rejecting the wedding sari, jewellery, and garland, Daya rejects the cultural norms of the Hindu community. She flaunts her naked body in front of her husband and refuses him the possession of her body. She yells that her husband shall never touch her body. She storms at him that she would never carry his baby. On the other hand, she yearns to meet Zil and adores to bear his child. Daya rejects her marital home and has an intimate relation with the Creole fisherman.

Daya is thrashed mercilessly for bringing dishonour and shame to the family. Joginder Singh's assertion is pertinent in this context. He states that " the mere perception that a woman has acted in a manner that brings 'dishonour' to the family is sufficient to trigger violence" (2010 :447). The Indian and Mauritian societies condemn and stigmatise women who quash the established culture because marriage is a sacred institution in

India and Mauritius where chastity of the woman is one of the fundamental virtues. A woman is bound to be loyal to her husband. The notions of honour, purity, and chastity are inscribed on the bodies of the Hindu women in India and Mauritius. Hindu women who subvert these codes of conduct and bring dishonour to the family and society are battered and expelled from society.

The mofines, the protectors of Hindu culture warn Daya to reestablish her marital life abandoning her extramarital life which would fetch her dishonour and pain. They alert her to resume her conjugal and familial responsibilities. They argue that Daya's duty is to serve her husband obediently and bear his child. They emphasize that maternity and motherhood would complete her life and bring honour to Daya as a woman. Meenakshi Thapan explains the social status of woman in India which is alike in Mauritius. She expresses:

Childbearing is central to married women's well-being and sense of personhood and identity. Women who cannot bear children are incomplete and unfulfilled. A woman's body has failed her, and becomes a source of shame, mental agony, and dishonour. (2009 : 134).

Daya is entombed alive as she brings disgrace and humiliation to her husband and his family. In this context, Devi evokes the legendary love story from Indian classical literature. Saleem, the son of the great Mughal emperor, Akbar, falls in love with a courtesan Anarkali. Akbar forbids the love affair between Saleem and Anarkali since she is not noble by birth. When Saleem refuses to renounce his love for Anarkali, she is entombed alive. Like Anarkali, Daya is locked in a chicken shed and left to die in the torrential rains that bury her.

Conclusion

Pagli is exemplary in highlighting the Hindu cultural elements in Mauritius. The upheaval and agony of displacement from the roots to a foreign soil kindle the spirit of the Hindu Mauritians to constantly keep themselves connected with their homeland through their ancestral traditions and customs. They also transmit and cultivate their

ancestral culture in their offspring to inform them of their glorious cultural values and the rich heritage of their nation. The cultivation of Hindu cultural practices offers solace to the hearts which always sing in praise of their cultural roots.

Belonging to the Indian Diaspora, Ananda Devi explains in an interview that she finds the ancient Indian traditions as an inexhaustible source of inspiration for her writing. Though raised in Mauritius, she confesses that her profound attachment to the Indian culture is anchored in the richness of the Indian civilization. The cultural, religious, and mythological influences portrayed abundantly in her novels are a conscious and unconscious affirmation of her ancestral roots.

Hindu Mauritians perform the rites of passage attributing a sacred dimension to every cultural element of their historical roots. They nourish their relationship with their ancestral land to reconstruct their identity which has been an integral element of the Indian Diaspora. They retain their emotional, cultural, and spiritual links with *Bharat Mata*. Their language, religion, and culture are markers of their Hindu ethnic identity in Mauritius.

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