SPACE, AND THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE OF SENSE-OF-PLACE AND ATTACHMENT TO PLACE:

A Case-Study Of Merewent and its Residents

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December 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank, and express my appreciation to you for making the completion of this thesis successful:

- Mother, father and brother, Ashwin – thank you for always being here for me, and for making my education a possibility.
- Nancy Odendaal, my supervisor – thank you for your guidance and encouragement.
- Premie, Jayshri, Yeshmeta, Nitasha, and Vishanth – thank you for being the most wonderful friends that a girl could ask for.
- All of the respondents - who have so unselfishly lent me their time and provided me with valuable insights.
- Claudette and Terrence – for providing me with a 'base' during my fieldwork.
- Buddy Govender – for kindly assisting me with maps for my study-area.
- My colleagues at campus – just knowing that we have all been in the same boat together has helped to depths.
- God - for being the most stable force in my life, and for constantly guiding me.

ॐ December 2001 ॐ

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER THREE: MEREBANK: TRANSITIONS THROUGH TIME – FROM *SPACE* TO *PLACE*

CHAPTER FOUR: MEREBANK AS *PLACE*

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF PLATES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBD	Central Business District
DCC	Durban City Council
DSW	Durban Solid Waste
ISER	Institute for Social and Environmental Research
MIRA	Merebank Indian Residents Association
MRA	Merebank Residents Association
MSA	Merebank Sports Association
MTSS	Merebank Tamil School Society
NIA	Natal Indian Association
SDCEA	South Durban Community Environmental Alliance

PREFACE

I have decided to include a preface to this thesis so that the reader is able to understand why this topic is of importance to me. There are two basic reasons. Firstly, I am very interested in the ways wherein people nurture their spiritual well-being in the postmodern world of today, which is characterised by ongoing change; ambiguity; a large variety of choice; and even chaos. A major part of spiritual well-being is psychological well-being. The ways wherein people relate to space and place plays a fundamental role, I think, in impacting upon their psychological well-being – in terms of identity; sense of belonging; safety; security; privacy; etc.

Secondly, it has not ceased to fascinate me how we as people tend to, either consciously or unconsciously, associate particular places with particular people. This is especially fascinating when it occurs in the presently *democratic* context of South Africa. Should people's mindsets not have changed by now? Should it not be okay, and acceptable by all, for persons of different race and colour to be living within the same neighbourhoods? This issue caught my attention – very deeply – when not more than a year ago (more than six years into democracy) I was told by a neighbour – for no apparent reason to me - that I should be living in 'Phoenix' or 'Chatsworth', where 'I belong'. Both Phoenix and Chatsworth are formerly 'Indian Townships' of Durban. I am an Indo-African, who has been living in Umbilo, Durban, for the past five years during the period of my study.

This neighbour of mine, however unintentionally, served to inspire me and to get me thinking! *Why* do people choose to live in the places that they do? How did she (my neighbour) know where 'I' *belonged*? ... Perhaps I *would* feel more 'belonging' in a place like Phoenix - simply because I would receive greater 'acceptance' there. But then again, why should I give up the advantage of a location that has been convenient for the purposes of my study, simply because the idea of different people living together is still a somewhat new one in our country?

There were many questions indeed, with an even greater number of possible answers I suppose, but I knew one thing for sure at that point – people must have their reasons for trying to hang onto spaces that apartheid has been responsible for creating. This thesis is an attempt into understanding the dimensions of the space-place relationship, with particular reference to the formerly Indian Township of Merebank, South Durban.

That which we all require as a basic starting point, I think, is understanding – understanding of ourselves, and of others. This is evident from global happenings, such as the Anti-Racism Conference held in Durban in August - September of this year, and the Terrorist Attacks against the United States of America, which also occurred in September of this year. It is needless to state the role of planners herein – we have a responsibility to understand, to as great an extent as possible, the people that we plan for. It is hoped that this study will make a contribution towards the understanding of Indian people in South Africa, as regards space-place relationships – wherein factors such as history and cultural heritage play fundamental roles in influencing attachment to place, and sense-of-belonging within places.

CHAPTER ONE
ORIENTATION

"There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged, to find ways in which you yourself have altered".

Nelson R Mandela

"Community is the continual process of getting to know people, caring, and sharing responsibility for the physical and spiritual condition of the living space".

King 1981:233 in Sandercock, L (1998)

1.1. Introduction

Many geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists (Duncan, 1990; Jacobs, 1996; Rapoport, 1976; Relph, 1976; Yeoh and Kong, 1995) – amongst others – have argued about explanations relating to the social meanings of place, and for different senses-of-place. According to Massey and Jess (1995, pg 98), "It has been argued that wanting to have a place where you feel that you belong is a natural human attribute ... the need for place is more a kind of survival strategy". Although not all academics agree with such an argument, arguing that it is a mere generalization across the extraordinary diversity of human cultures, a basic point of agreement is that places have no inherent meaning – only the meanings that humans attribute to them (Massey and Jess, 1995, pg 98).

Distinctive and diverse places are thus manifestations of a deeply felt involvement with particular places, by the people who live in them. Additionally, for many people, such a profound attachment to place is as necessary and as significant as a close relationship with other people (Relph, 1976, pg i). The place-making process (attaching meaning and symbolism to space) can be understood in terms of its being contingent upon the transaction and interpretation of meanings attached to the place.

So, how do we as planners engage with these meanings and symbolisms that people attach to place? As planners, it is of my belief that we are, to a large extent, responsible for creating environments that are not merely *functional spaces*, but *'places'* – spaces that take into due consideration the needs, the lifestyles, the values, and the beliefs of those whom we actually plan for. It therefore becomes our duty to make every attempt to understand the meanings and the symbolisms that people attach to place, and to work in collaboration with these meanings and symbolisms in our efforts to create more holistic and people-sensitive environments.

This, however, poses a challenge for people engaged in the planning profession – since there is at any one time a complex myriad of meanings and symbolisms that may be attached to any particular place. This is especially significant in a post-modern era, wherein the dominant focus seems to be upon embracing the *multiplicity* in everything. How do we then cater for the wide range of interests that may exist in any one particular place, let alone the range of interests presented in the broader environment as well?

Herein arises the issues of history, community, and identity, and the roles and interrelationships of these, associated with the place-making process. South Africa is an immensely interesting place to be working in in this regard, since the past coincidence of modernism with apartheid, and the present coincidence of postmodernism with democracy in the country, now allows planners the opportunity to actively participate in the broader process of equalisation and increased representation.

The history of places, and of people within places, thus serves as a fundamental starting-point in terms of the interests that are rightfully deserving of representation during current times. Herein it should be understood that *complete consensus* cannot at any one time be obtained in terms of the interests of people, but that there indeed are groups of people with *common* interests, who attach *common* meanings and symbolisms to places – even if the understandings, values and interpretations of these meanings and symbolisms differ from individual to individual.

The role of *symbols* is important herein, and planners thus have a role to play in understanding the significance behind the meanings that people attach to particular symbols within particular places. According to Cohen (1985, pg 21), "Symbols are effective because they are imprecise ... part of their meaning is 'subjective' ... they are ideal media through which people can speak a 'common' language ... without subordinating themselves to the tyranny of orthodoxy". Multiple identities have to first be understood in terms of each of their unique qualities and characteristics, before they can be forged into a common destiny geared towards true democracy.

1.2. Explanation of Topic

The nature of *space* takes on a variety of forms, and it is necessary to briefly outline each of these forms of space in order to develop an understanding of the relationship between space and *place*. According to Relph (1976), space can be defined in terms of (i) pragmatic or primitive space, (ii) perceptual space, (iii) existential space (comprising of sacred space and geographical space), (iv) architectural space and planning space, (v) cognitive space, and (vi) abstract space. Each of these will be briefly outlined before the relationships between them are outlined.

Firstly, *pragmatic or primitive space* is the space of "instinctive behaviour and unselfconscious action in which we always act and move without reflection" (Relph, 1976, pg 8). This space, according to Relph, is structured unselfconsciously by basic individual experiences. It begins in infancy and is associated with both the movement of the body and with the senses. The important aspect to be noted for my research within this form of space is that at this primitive level, it is difficult to distinguish space and place (Relph, 1976, pg 9).

Secondly, *perceptual space* is space that is not grasped merely by our senses, but it is space that we live in, project our personalities into, and develop emotional bonds with. This type of space is of immense relevance to this thesis.

Thirdly – and of most importance to my research – *existential space* is the "inner structure of space as it appears to us in our concrete experiences of the world as members of a cultural group" (Bollnow, 1967 in Relph, 1976, pg 12). Existential space is constantly being created and re-made by human activities. "The meanings of existential space are therefore those of a culture as experienced by an individual, rather than a summation of the meanings of individual perceptual spaces" (Relph, 1976, pg 13). According to Norberg-Schulz (1971, pg 17), existential space has 'object character'. Thus, space is the product of an interaction between the organism and the environment in which the perceived organization of the universe cannot be dissociated from the activity itself (Piaget, J, in Norberg-Schulz, 1971, pg 17).

It should be noted that existential space may further be divided in terms of *sacred space* and *geographical space*. The major focus of this thesis is on that of scared space – that is, space that is replete with symbols, sacred centres, and meaningful objects. In total, such an experience of space can be viewed as a place-making process. Although the focus is upon the meanings and symbolisms that people attach to place, geographical space cannot be ignored, and is intimately linked with the humanisation and personalisation of space – for example, by investigating and exploring the significance of place-names, since – according to Hawkes, 1951, "Place names are among the things that link men most intimately with their territory" (Relph, 1976, pg 16).

Fourthly, architectural space may be defined as space that is not based upon experiences of space, but is concerned primarily with function, as reflected in two-dimensional cognitive space of maps and plans (Relph, 1976, pg 22). Similarly, the concept of place as used in urban and regional planning refers to little more than a location where certain specified interactions occur, and where certain limited functions are served – for example, a shopping centre of a suburban neighbourhood, or an arbitrarily defined community that can be identified on a map (Relph, 1976, pg 24). Thus, it is evident that such a notion of place is concerned little with spatial experience, but is closely linked with *cognitive space*. It is the aim of this thesis to show how architectural and

planning space can be deconstructed in order to uncover the meanings and symbolisms that people attach to them.

Fifthly, *cognitive space* is a homogeneous space having equal value everywhere, and in all directions (Relph, 1976, pg 25). Such space is uniform and neutral.

Finally, in *abstract space* there is no foundation for physical or social reality, and all of the concrete differences of our sense-experiences are eliminated (Relph, 1976, pg 26). Thus, in such space, places are nothing more than points constituting just one element within the overall system of abstract elements.

In demonstrating the relationships between these space-forms, Norberg-Schulz (1971, pg 11) nicely sums it up by stating that "Pragmatic space integrates man with his natural, 'organic' environment, perceptual space is essential to his identity as a person, existential space makes him belong to a social and cultural totality, cognitive space means he is able to think about space, and logical space ... offers him a tool to describe the others". To these can be added the built and planned spaces that serve to integrate experience and thought, since knowledge of maps and plans is an important aspect of our experiences of existential and perceptual space.

Place then, moves beyond just being a planned territory of functionality. Rather, it will be the aim of this thesis to show that there are deep psychological links between the people and the places wherein they live and interact. According to Yeoh and Kong (1995, pg 13), people invest meanings in places, and there are inextricable links between the lives, movements, and activities of people and place. Additionally, places themselves develop identities and personalities, but people also develop identities *with* places. This allows them to develop a sense-of-place, and thus they may experience attachment to place. This attachment to place can take the form of either / both an attachment to the natural environment and it's built characteristics, or / and an attachment to the *people* within it.

The role of *planning* within this research subject is to assert the need for the importance of *place* to be more greatly considered in the planning and / or remoulding of landscapes. There is an urgent need to incorporate the feelings and the perceptions of the people whom planners' actually plan *for* into the process of urban and regional planning. Afterall, isn't it the *people* that we are actually planning for? The planning process must no longer be largely a technical process that is left up to the *experts*, who in turn hope that people will use the places that they plan in accordance with the fulfilment of *their own* (that is, the professionals) intentions and hopes for the planned environments, but it must actively consider and incorporate the needs and the lifestyles of the *people* that are being planned *for*.

1.3. The Research Problem

- In spite of their attempts to plan healthy environments, planners often do not adequately consider the socio-cultural constitution and perceptions of those whom they actually plan *for*.

This is relevant internationally – for example, in India, traditional built-environmental forms are more suitable (both in terms of climate and culture) than newly imported ones (Rapoport, A, 1976), but particularly relevant in South Africa, due to the legacy of the complementing ideologies of apartheid and modernism, and the resultant legacy of the imposition of a dominantly 'white' vision onto the South African landscape. Herein, relatively static master-plans were based upon crude social theories that sought to engineer society through the technical manipulation of the physical environment (Faludi, 1970 in Scott, 1999).

Now, in a post-apartheid, post-modern South Africa wherein planners have more freedom than ever before, it is of extreme necessity for planners to plan more humanely. In dealing with man-environment relationships, at least three broad, yet basic, questions should be asked and answered through all stages of the planning process. These include (i) what characteristics of people as individuals and groups are important in shaping environments, and in the

understanding of environments? (ii) what are the effects of the physical environment upon people, and how important are these effects?, and (iii) what are the principal mechanisms linking people and environments?

Answering these questions requires studies of different socio-cultural groups of people, since people largely experience places based upon their socio-cultural constitution and the meanings and symbolisms that they resultantly attach to these places. This thesis will be a contribution towards the study of *one* socio-cultural group of people in a particular context of place (Indian residents in Merewent), since neither time nor cost would allow for cross-cultural studies in differing contexts.

1.3.1. Research Question

- What kinds of meanings and symbolisms do people invest into places, and how do these impact upon their overall sense of psychological well-being? How can planners more actively engage with these meanings and symbolisms, in order to create more holistic environments?

1.3.2. Subsidiary Questions

- What role did history play in the establishment and formation of Merebank?
- What role does cultural heritage play in the place-making process here?
- Are the meanings and symbolisms that are invested into Merebank more a result of the physical and natural environment, or is it more a result of socio-cultural phenomena?
- How do people's meanings and symbolisms manifest themselves in the everyday lives of the people?
- How do people's meanings and symbolisms manifest themselves in the physical environment of Merebank?

- Are there any significant symbols that contribute towards the identity and personality of Merebank and its residents?
- What facets of the Merebank environment contribute towards either a healthy sense of psychological well-being, or a poor sense of psychological well-being?
    - Sense of community belonging / non-belonging.
    - Sense of identity as an individual; sense of identity with a larger constituency such as community / groups / organisations.
    - Sense of emotional and physical security / insecurity, relating to the place.
    - Convenience.
    - Privacy.
    - Pollution effects.

1.4. Introduction to the Case-Study, and Reason for Case-Study Choice

The experiences of sense-of-place and attachment to place are represented in this thesis by the formal Indian residents of Merewent – a former Indian residential area that is located approximately fifteen kilometres south of the city of Durban (See Figure 1, overleaf, for location and spatial context).

One of the oldest established residential areas in KwaZulu-Natal, Merewent was characterised by large-scale intervention by the Durban Town Council (which later became the Durban City Council), in order to create an industrial zone in the Southern Corridor, wherein "The goal was to transform a 'disorderly' living space into an 'orderly' racially segregated and industrially efficient space" (CSIR, 1997, pg 9). Modernist, utopian visions were thus translated onto the space of southern Durban, and no considerations were made in terms of the historical significance of the area; the emotional attachment to place; communal value systems; and local political resistance.

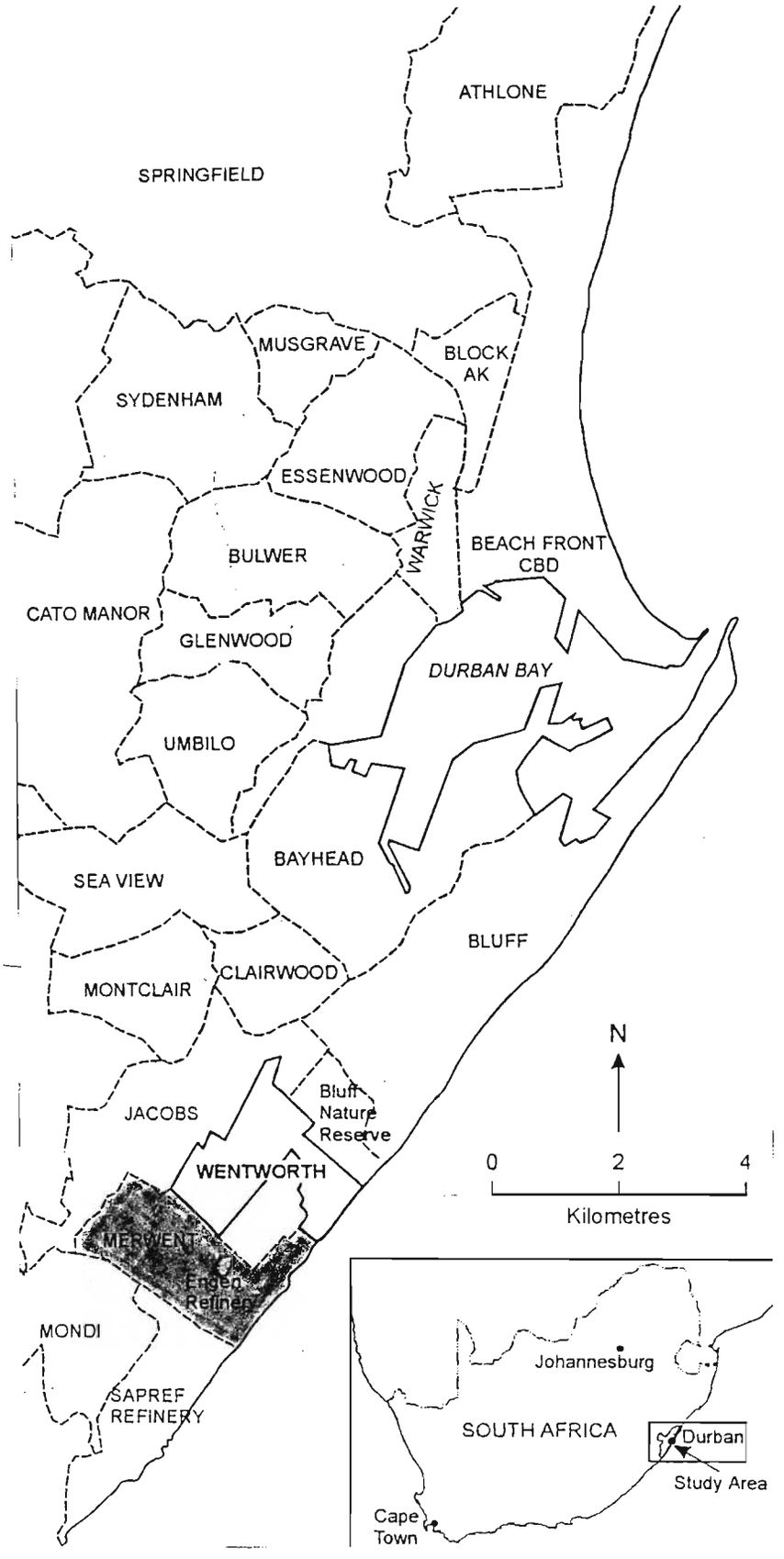


Figure 1: Locational Map of Merewent within the context of the Durban Metropolitan Area and South Africa

Beginning in the early 1920's, the Durban Town Council persistently and systematically implemented the policy of industrializing the southern Durban corridor, and urged by the Natal Chamber of Industries, the Council extended its boundary in 1931 in order to have jurisdiction over southern Durban (Scott, 1995). The 1934 Town Planning Ordinance was instrumental in empowering local authorities to plan municipal areas that would ensure orderly development, and it was within the rubric of the 'planned city' that the Durban City Council began to undertake the "twin imperatives of residential segregation and slum clearance, and industrial planning in the southern corridor, commencing in the 1930's" (Scott, 1999, pg 14).

The zoning of the South Durban industrial area not only differentiated between specialist work zones (of central importance to the planning of the industrial zone, and parallel to these initiatives, was the plan to provide adjacent labour reservoirs) and zones for residential use, but also between residential zones on the basis of race. The building of the Merebank-Wentworth public Housing Scheme commenced in 1939, with 1050 acres of land set out for Indians and 235 acres set out for Coloureds (Scott and Ridsdale, 1997, pg 10). This Housing Scheme that was initiated by the Council was the first formal residential zone designed with the specific purpose of providing labour for the 'productive zone' (Scott, 1999, pg 12). This scheme was thus an early attempt to create a racial zone, setting the foundations for the application of the Group Areas Act of 1950.

According to Scott (1995, pg 104), the aesthetic of modernism presented a geometric and visual order which appeared logical from 'above or outside' and existed in the abstract representation – far removed from the experience of those whose 'lived' space was the subject under scrutiny. Thus, while the residents of southern Durban were the 'insiders' who related to their environment experientially through their everyday activities, the Durban Town Council viewed this zone from the 'outside' (Scott, 1999,pg 7). Herein, the Council viewed southern Durban as a "physical container", and did not give due attention to the residents' 'sense of place' in the area (Scott, 1999, pg 7).

At present, the location of industry and residential communities in such close proximity to one another reflects the consequences of the development of a racially segregated industrial core which commenced in the 1920's. Characterised by a residential environment surrounded by industries that have undergone large-scale expansion, the area is today steeped in unacceptably high levels of industrial pollution.

According to a newspaper article in the Mail and Guardian (April 28 – May 4 2000, pg 7), "Apartheid-era town planning saw the poorest communities of Durban – Wentworth, Austerville and Merebank – develop next to the port's two refineries. The white suburbs nearest the refineries are all situated much higher than the Indian and Coloured suburbs – ensuring white people had to breathe in the least pollution and are affected the least". Furthermore, while "In Scandinavian countries, a typical oil refinery will produce at the most two tons of sulphur dioxide gas in a day, in South Africa oil refineries produce as much as 82 tons of the noxious gas every day" (Mail and Guardian, 2000, pg 7 - See Article in Appendix C).

Pollution in the area includes that of air, noise, and dumping. Air pollution is a major problem with – especially – sulphur dioxide contributing towards ill-health in residents in terms of causing asthma and being carcinogenic. Some of the industries causing these polluting gaseous emissions include the Engen-Sapref oil refinery and Mondi paper-mill. In terms of noise pollution, aside from the heavy vehicles that are constantly active in the area, the activities of the Durban International Airport are responsible for causing high levels of noise-pollution.

Resultantly, environmental groups – such as the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) – are lobbying together in order to fight further degradation of their living environment.

According to a baseline environmental assessment of the South Durban Strategic Environmental Assessment (1995, pg 15), an SDI (Spatial

Development Initiative) has been identified for Durban, wherein initiatives being considered for industrial development in South Durban include:

- A petrochemical cluster focused on the expansion of existing refinery facilities, including the development of an ethanol cracking plant.
- Relocation of Durban International Airport to La Mercy, which will free over 600 hectares of prime industrial land in South Durban.
- Development of a container-handling facility on the airport site, with linkages to the existing port.
- Construction of a Sasol gas pipeline to South Durban (which has, notwithstanding the strong opposition by the community, gone ahead in May – June 2001: Refer to Article in Appendix C: Sunday Tribune, April 15, 2001).
- Establishment of a new waste-water treatment plant.
- Establishment of a new power-generator fuelled by waste generated by the Engen refinery, and
- The development of an Industrial Development Zone in the area.

In terms of the *community* of Merewent, it still remains predominantly Indian (racial structure of Merewent being that of 20 White, 1 599 Coloured, 25 704 Indian – that is 97%, and 338 Black persons, according to Scott and Ridsdale, 1997, pg 18), with a high sense of identity. This may be attributed to the long term of residence in the area, and to communal bonds. However, this has been severely impacted upon and segmented by the adjacent non-residential industrial land-uses (Scott and Ridsdale, 1997, pg 14). The gender structure of Merewent residents consists of 49% males, and 51% females (Scott and Ridsdale, 1997, pg19). Additionally, there has been a history of Indian community schools in the area, and almost all of the homes in Merebank are individual residences, with the Council-built houses now being mostly privately-owned (Scott and Ridsdale, 1997, pg 30).

As regards the *choice of case-study: Formal Indian Residents of Merewent*, there are three points that must be made. Firstly, 'Indian' residents, due to the fact that the area of Merewent was established as a racially segregated

Indian township under apartheid, and today still remains largely an 'Indian area', with the whole of Merewent having a concentration of over 2 000 Indian people per square kilometre (Scott and Ridsdale, 1997, pg 17).

Furthermore, this thesis is based upon the theoretical framework of postmodernism, and since postmodernism stresses the importance of moving towards new levels of understanding and diversity, it is hoped that this work will be able to provide greater insight into an understanding of the 'Indian' component of embracing diversity and multi-culturalism. I hope to make a contribution towards an understanding of this cultural group, since I believe that for planning to now be successful in terms of considering *all* people in South Africa, planners have to be more cognizant of those that have previously been considered as 'minority' and 'marginal'.

I should stress that since I employ facets of the discourse of *postmodernism*, one might expect me to not look at a specific racial group in isolation, but to consider the range of races and cultures. However, I believe that the only way wherein we will in the future be able to plan with due consideration for *all*, is by first gaining in-depth understandings of **each** of the many *groupings* of society as a whole.

This requires – at the very least – an in-depth understanding of the various racial groups in South Africa, since values; beliefs; meanings; and symbolisms (all essential to sense-of-place) are largely grounded in the cultural composition of people. I think that it is only fitting that input be gained from scholars who represent a variety of the cultures in South Africa, and even internationally for that matter.

It should be noted, however, that it is not the intent of this thesis to view the Indian racial / cultural group as homogeneous. This is the reason for the study investigating *individuals*, and their *identities / non-identities with* the group, based upon the common characteristics of: (i) being of Indian origin and having had been classified as 'Indian' during the segregatory times of apartheid; (ii) living in Merewent at present and thus experiencing a common

environment; and (iii) 34% of the residents having had chosen *cultural community* as the most positive aspect of the social environment during a social perception survey carried out in 1995 (SDCEA, 1995).

Secondly, I think that it is interesting to use the residents of Merewent in South Durban as a case-study in this research not only because they seem to have a very strong attachment to the place (in view of their persistence to reside in the area even though the high level of industrial pollution in the area has brought with it many negative consequences), but also because it is ironic that they seem to have developed such a strong attachment to a place that was in fact created under racial segregation during apartheid. Additionally, they are willing to fight for the place and protect it.

Thirdly, I think that it is useful to gain a formal understanding into the meanings and symbolisms that the people of the area have invested into the place, since it will contribute to making professionals more aware of some of the reasons for the strong opposition to further industrial development in the area.

1.5. Hypothesis

- History, culture and sense of community are intimately linked with an individual's experience of place, thus allowing her / him to attach meaning and symbolism to place, ultimately contributing towards a person's overall sense of psychological well-being.

1.6. Research Methodology

1.6.1. *Main Objectives of the Research*

- To understand and to demonstrate the links that exist between people and their environment in terms of sense-of-place, the place-making

process, and psychological well-being – with particular emphasis upon the residents of Merewent.

- To make professionals of the built-environment more aware of the need to integrate the perceptions and feelings of the people that they plan for into the planning process.

1.6.2. *The Approach*

In view of the objectives of this thesis, a *qualitative* research approach has been employed in order to gain a phenomenologist understanding of the nature of being (ontology) and the nature of knowing (epistemology). According to Palys (1997, pg 16), "Phenomenologists maintain that any effort to understand human behaviour must take into account that humans are cognitive beings who actively perceive and make sense of the world around them, have the capacity to abstract from their experience, ascribe meaning to their behaviour and the world around them, and are affected by those meanings".

Attitudes, values, beliefs, and perceptions are best gained by Max Weber's concept of *verstehen* – which involves the more intimate and emphatic understanding of human action in terms of its *interpretive* meaning to the subject (Palys, 1997, pg 18). Associated with this, is the idea of researchers having to more carefully *listen* to their informants (a requirement which Sandercock, 1998, views as being very important in planning).

Aside from the secondary research that has been undertaken, a qualitative primary-research approach has helped to ensure that no variables have been ruled out, and that perceptual variables have been expressly considered. Furthermore, this approach sees as important the *process*, and it has thus allowed for the researcher to probe into peoples' perceptions and their meanings, and gauge how these emerge and change.

This qualitative research approach has been based upon the interactive methods of (i) in-depth, in-person individual interviews and (ii) focus-group

interviews. The advantages of the interactive research method were that it has allowed for the interviewer to ensure that the appropriate person completed the interview, that necessary clarifications in understanding were able to be made on the spot, and that since the interviewer asked the questions, the respondent did not have to necessarily be literate. Additionally, these face-to-face interviews allowed for seeking depth of response, and were fairly open-ended in their construction in order to allow for phenomenological input from respondents. The fact that the interviews were conducted either at the homes of the respondents, or at suitable locations within the study-area, served to contribute positively to the level of comfort felt by respondents, since they felt 'at home' at these locations.

The focus-group interviews have essentially been group-versions of the individual face-to-face interviews, and have therefore had many of the same advantages as that of the individual interviews. However, two unique advantages have been offered by this approach: Firstly, rather than simply taking an inventory of opinions through individual interviews, the focus-group setting allowed for differences among perspectives to be highlighted and negotiated, ultimately allowing for participants to discuss related dynamics and articulate the rationales underlying particular perspectives. According to Blumer (1969, in Palys, 1997, pg 157), "A small number of ... individuals brought together as a discussion and resource group is more valuable many times over than any representative sample". And the second advantage of the focus-group interview was that it afforded the researcher a greater opportunity to 'witness' extensive interaction on the topic within a relatively limited time-frame, rather than to have had 'influenced' the discussion.

In addition to the individual interviews and the focus-group interviews, the *observation* technique has also been utilised. According to Palys (1997, pg 196), Weick (1968), Babbie (1989), etc. suggest that a major element in differentiating observational studies is the relationship between the observer and the observed. The continuum of roles that is envisioned, attributed to Gold (1958) and Junker (1960), can range from the **complete participant** to the **complete observer**, as depicted in Figure 2 (Palys, 1997, pg 197).

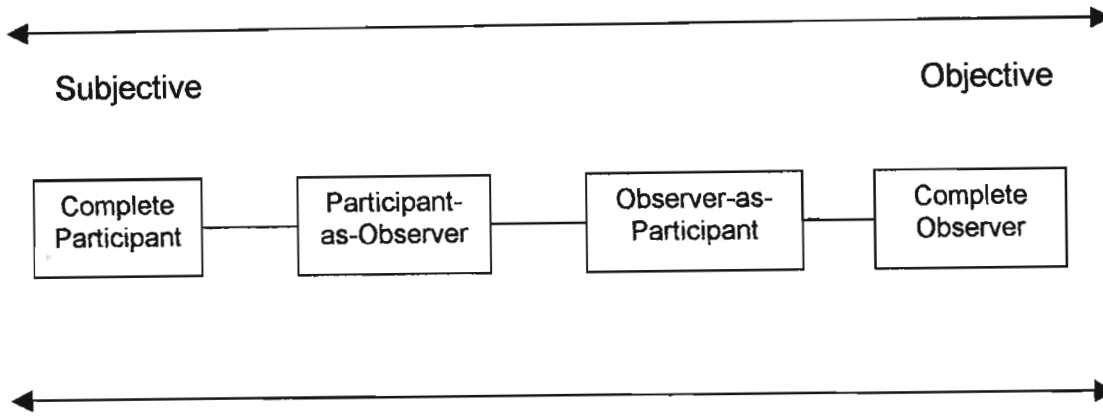


Figure 2: The Traditional Observational Continuum (Source: Palys, 1997, pg 197).

For the research purposes of this thesis, the researcher has assumed the roles of (i) observer as participant – that is, during the individual interviews and focus-group interviews, (ii) complete observer in the field – that is, viewing the natural and the built environment of Merewent, in order to note signs and symbols that are peculiar to the particular place and its people; and the role of complete observer also during the attendance of two meetings in the Merebank area – that is, a Housing Public Meeting, and a meeting entitled "Let's make Bombay Square Business Beautiful".

1.6.3. *The Sample*

The *in-depth individual interviews* were conducted with a total of twenty respondents from Merewent. Of this total, ten interviews were conducted with female residents of the area, and ten with males, in an attempt to obtain a balanced perspective. A sample number of twenty was chosen for the in-depth interviews, since the researcher was of the feeling that focusing intensely upon a smaller number of respondents would yield greater depth in the quality of information collected, as opposed to a superficial depth that may have been obtained if a greater number of respondents had been interviewed,

at the expense of in-depth, quality responses (See list of respondents in Appendix A).

There were three pre-requisites in selecting the respondents for the in-depth individual interviews of the residents. These included:

- ❖ They must have been previously classified as 'Indian' – this is due to the historical links with racial segregation, Merewent having had been created as an 'Indian' township, and the resultant objectives of the research.
- ❖ They must have been current formal residents of Merewent.
- ❖ They must have been over 18 years of age – due to the objective of investigating *attachment* to place, based on the assumption that those people over 18 years of age have a choice in living there, while those below 18 years of age live in the area based primarily upon the choice of their parents.

Key respondents interviewed included: (1) Professor Tim Quinlan – an anthropologist at ISER, University of Durban Westville; (2) Umsha Naidoo – co-ordinator of the Merebank Residents Association (MRA); (3) Mr Tex Pillay – Chairperson of the MRA, Merebank Policing Forum, and Merebank Pension Forum; (4) Mr Vishnu Singh – a member of the Merebank Secondary School governing-body, and a member of the Merewent Sporting Club; (5) Mr M Naidoo – of the Merebank Pension Forum; (6) Mr M Sewsunker – of the Merebank Pension Forum; and (7) Mr Bobby Naidoo – Ex-Treasurer of the Merebank Ratepayers Association.

Three *focus groups* were held, wherein each group consisted of a total of five respondents. Focus groups held included: (1) The *Daffodils Senior Citizens Group*; (2) A *Women's Circle Group*; and (3) A *Pensioner's Group* (See Appendix A for details of Respondents within each group).

Meetings attended wherein the researcher assumed the role of complete observer included: (1) A Public Meeting for Low Cost Housing in the area – this was a follow-up meeting wherein the Housing Department presented its

plans for a low-cost housing project in the area that was intended to house both informal dwellers as well as residents of Merebank, and a decision was taken by the residents regarding whether or not they wanted the project to go ahead; and (2) A meeting dedicated towards the introduction of a beautification programme to upgrade *Bombay Square*, entitled *Let's Make Bombay Square Business Beautiful* – a joint initiative by the MRA, the Keep Durban Beautiful Association, Parks, City Health, Durban Solid Waste, and the Merebank Secondary School. Attendance of these meetings served to give the researcher insight into resident's attitudes and feelings towards pertinent issues relating to place, such as attitudes and feelings relating to environmental issues in the area; attitudes and feelings relating to the issue of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the area; etc.

The aim of this approach towards, and methods of, conducting the research has been that of establishing the attitudes; values; beliefs; and perceptions of the residents within the study-area. (A tabular form of the framework that has been employed for the research is presented as Appendix B). It is, however, necessary to view the research methodology component in conjunction with the conceptual framework of this thesis. Chapter Two is dedicated towards the conceptual framework.

1.7. Chapter Outline

This dissertation comprises of five chapters. The aim and the composition of each of the chapters are as follows:

Chapter One: Orientation

This chapter has served to provide an introduction to the thesis; an explanation of the research topic; and it has provided a description of the framework for the research, in terms of the *research problem* and the research methodology. The main research problem has been discussed, and the research and subsidiary questions arising from the research problem have been stated. A discussion of the research problem is essential since it demonstrates the reasons for the need for the incorporation of residents'

perceptions and feelings into the planning process. The *research question* and the *subsidiary questions* form the foundation of the actual research that has been undertaken for the purposes of this thesis, in an overall attempt to tackle the research problem.

The chosen *case-study* has been outlined, since this forms the context within which the primary research has been undertaken, and the main *reasons for the particular choice of case-study* have been given. A *hypothesis* has been posed, in order to provide an "educated guess" as to what influences the ultimate answer to the research question.

A discussion of the *research methodology* employed in the study has been provided. This is an important component of the overall study, since it makes clear the main objectives of the study; provides a rationale for the type of research approach, and research methods, chosen; it describes the rationale behind the chosen sample; and it describes the role of the researcher in the study.

Chapter Two: The Conceptual Framework

Since this thesis has a large theoretical slant to it, it is essential to locate the research, and the analysis thereof, within a framework that allows for the relationships between theory and practical findings to be linked. Facets of *three theoretical perspectives* are of particular pertinence to this study. These include: (i) Idealism; (ii) Modernism; and (iii) Postmodernism / Postructuralism. In discussing each of these perspectives, this chapter attempts to make clear the implications of space-place relationships within each of these approaches, and attempts to show how planning has been, and can be, influenced by different strands of thought during different periods of time, within different *contexts*.

It should be noted that although the theoretical perspectives / discourses have not been tackled very much at length in this chapter, every attempt has been made to demonstrate the links between theory and practice throughout the course of this thesis. The reason for this is that the researcher is of the feeling

that theory and practice are most useful when viewed in terms of their interdependent relationships.

It is hoped that the provision of working definitions of *key concepts*, relating to the subject of the study, will be useful in terms of providing a deeper understanding into the descriptions and analyses contained in this thesis.

Chapter Three: Merebank: Transitions through Time – From *Space* to *Place*

The actual case-study will be investigated within two chapters – that is, chapter three and chapter four. Any investigation of place, sense-of-place, and attachment to place cannot be undertaken without an adequate understanding of not only the *history of the place itself*, but should also delve into the *history of the people within the place*. This chapter will thus largely be a descriptive chapter, providing a history of Merebank and its people. This is of critical importance, in order to facilitate a greater understanding of the origins of the current meanings and symbolisms attached to the place, by its residents.

Chapter Four: Merebank as *Place*

This chapter provides a *detailed analysis* of the elements that constitute the place-making process in Merebank. It examines the reasons for the residents of the area having become attached to the place, and it investigates the meanings and the symbolisms that these people attach to the place. The roles of history, cultural heritage, symbols, socio-cultural issues, lifestyles, and the physical environment are investigated in terms of the contributions that they make, and have made, to the place-making process in the area. Implications of these for people's overall sense of psychological well-being are also investigated, since the ways wherein people relate to space and place plays a fundamental role in impacting upon their overall state of psychological well-being – for instance, in terms of identity; sense of belonging; safety; security; and privacy. This chapter also provides a brief *descriptive synthesis* of the findings of the study, by building up the separate elements into a connected whole.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications for Future Planning Initiatives

This chapter attempts to draw together the previous chapters into a conclusion of the thesis. Chapters three and four are briefly summarised and discussed in view of the theories and concepts discussed in chapter two, in order to provide a conclusion in terms of the hypothesis, and implications for future planning initiatives. According to Palys (1997, pg 59), "A theory specifies relationships among constructs in the abstract; the hypothesis applies the theory to a concrete situation, bringing the theory into contact with the real world so that its viability can be assessed".

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

"He's a real Nowhere Man,
Sitting in his Nowhere Land
Making all his Nowhere Plans for Nobody.
He's as blind as he can be,
Just sees what he wants to see.
Nowhere Man, can you see me at all?"

J. Lennon / P. McCartney, The Beatles, 1965

"All aspects of the environment exist for us only so far as they are related to our purposes. If you leave out human significance, you leave out all constancy, all repeatability, all form".

Lowenthal, D, 1961 in Porteous, J.D, 1977:163

2.1. Background

The concepts of *space* and *place* are certainly not new to town planning. In fact, they are concepts that are familiar to a number of other disciplines as well – psychology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and – of course – geography. According to Norberg-Schulz (1971, pg 10), 'human' space has been studied by psychologists for about a hundred years, and it has been proven that space perception is a complex process, wherein a number of variables are involved. The implication herein is that we do not simply perceive a world that is common to all of us. Rather, we perceive "different worlds which are a product of our motivations and past experiences" (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, pg 10). Space then, as acknowledged by the *poststructuralists*, does not simply exist ready-made but is constructed and produced. Furthermore, space is not objective, but fragmented; and there cannot be a divide between space and time.

The question then is, what does this mean in terms of planning? And in particular, what does it mean in terms of *South African* planning? Two fundamental implications may be identified: (i) During the pre-apartheid and the apartheid periods within South Africa, space was viewed as something that could be divided into discrete territorial units, wherein people could be segregated in terms of – primarily – racial characteristics. This period coincided with the rigidity and inflexibility of modern planning both internationally and in South Africa. Combining modern and apartheid ideas of space resulted in planning that attempted to impose certain kinds of environments upon certain groups of people, rather than taking into consideration more intangible phenomena such as social ties, culture, and community identity, and in fact planning environments *for* people.

(ii) Now, during the post-apartheid period in South Africa, which also coincides with a postmodern period, there is a rush to create new types of spaces (for example, the extension of the Durban metropolitan boundary in 2000 to form what now constitutes the *Durban Unicity*) aimed at greater levels of integration, inclusion and participation. In effect, space is now seen as something that can bring groups of people together, rather than keep them apart – primarily an attempt aimed at 'undoing the injustices of the past'.

From this, it is clear that during different *times*, not only was space moulded differently for differing reasons, but it was also *experienced* differently by different individuals and by different groups of people.

The role of the planning profession herein must therefore not be one of merely acknowledging and trying to adapt to the changes in discourse, but of attempting to understand *people* in terms of the changes in discourse. With regards to the subject of this thesis, spaces must now be seen as more than just abstract locations. Spaces must now be seen as *places*. Essentially, this requires professionals of the built environment to look at places through a lens that combines the historical, cultural, and intangible phenomenological components of people's experiences. Places cannot be planned as being separate from people and their experiences, since that which makes a space

a place, is the investment of meaning and symbolism into it by its users and by those who live in it and experience it. This in turn impacts upon the individual's sense of psychological well-being, in terms of factors such as identity, security, community belonging, privacy, convenience, etc.

2.2. Idealism, Modernism, and Postmodernism: Space-Place Implications

According to Handy (in Gibson, 1997, pg 16), "The great excitement of the future is that we can shape it". This holds true for the actions of every individual, but for those in the planning profession this is all the more significant, since those involved in the actual development and implementation of plans have an influential role to play in guiding the direction that change takes, thus influencing the direction that peoples' quality of life takes.

If it indeed is true that "Change is life's only constant" (Matathia, *et al*, 1999, pg 9), then it makes sense that we attempt to find ways of moving forward into the future, based upon lessons learned - and mistakes made - from experiences of both the past and the present. In current and future strivings towards creating healthy environments for people, historical experiences of space cannot be ignored, but must be embraced in terms of attempting to 'correct the mistakes' that have already been made. The rest of this chapter focuses upon the theories / discourses of idealism; modernism; and postmodernism, in order to demonstrate the implications that they have had, and continue to have, for planning in South Africa, with attention being focused upon space-place relationships.

2.2.1. The Philosophy of Idealism

"A theory of reality and of knowledge that attributes to consciousness, or the immaterial mind, a primary role in the constitution of the world ... the view that all physical objects are mind-dependent and can have no existence apart from a mind that is conscious of them" (Encarta Encyclopaedia, 1993-1998). The

implication herein is that reality is mind-dependent and that true knowledge of reality is gained by relying upon a spiritual or conscious source.

Thus, in one sense, place is the concrete setting for human lives, activity, and movement, making it the local milieu that is fundamental in the everyday lives of individuals, while simultaneously providing the context for collective acts of organisation, destruction, celebration, and conflict (Yeoh and Kong, 1995, pg 13). Additionally, place is a socially constructed entity that is invested with human meaning. People invest meanings in places, and there are inextricable links between the lives, movements, and activities of people and place (Yeoh and Kong, 1995, pg 13).

Integral to this idea is the fact that place is not an inert or an ahistoric form, but people are active participants in the historically contingent process of place-making. In terms of planning, it is therefore essential to understand and acknowledge the role of history in place-making, in addition to attempting to understand people in terms of their life experiences, movements, and activities. According to Yeoh and Kong (1995, pg 16), place meanings assume the form that they do because of the conditions within which they are formed. Thus, to understand place meanings, an understanding of these conditions is required.

However, it is important to add empirical substance to this idealistic conception of place in terms of broadening our understandings into the investment of meanings and symbolisms into place. Herein, we have to note that places are multi-coded and assume a plurality of meanings. Not only can places be significant for individuals – in terms of their being "repositories of personalised memories and centres of everyday routines" – but they can also be invested with collectivised meanings and symbolisms (Yeoh and Kong, 1995, pg 14). Thus, it is of importance to note that although this thesis focuses upon the *individual* experience of place by the Merewent residents, this is based upon the idea that it is through the *individual experience* that we can best understand the meanings invested into *community* (Cohen, 1985). Although meanings and symbols vary for each individual (Cohen, 1985, views

the community as a cultural field with a complex of symbols whose *meanings vary among its members*), they would have been experienced within the community.

Place-meanings are formed not only through routine everyday experiences and activities (that is, present realities), but they also derive from historic circumstances and occasions associated with the place. Herein, it must also be noted that place is not only defined by the 'ordinary' people who interact with places (in this case, the residents of Merewent), but it is also often subjected to being shaped by 'the power of others' (Eyles, 1988 in Yeoh and Kong, 1995, pg 14).

In considering these conceptual relationships in Merewent, it will be of most significance to consider the role of modernism (and apartheid) and postmodernism (and democracy) in terms of the implications that they have – and have had – for place-making in the area.

2.2.2 *Modernism and the 'Containerisation' of Space*

It is hardly possible to consider modernism in South Africa in isolation from the undemocratic and inequitable practices that were embodied herein. Important herein is the concept of 'organised modernism' - referred to by Brooks and Harrison, 1998, as "the twentieth century movement towards greater state involvement in everyday life" (Scott, 1999, pg 1). This constituted the local and national state having had worked together within a modernist discourse to lay the foundations for a modern industrial zone in South Durban.

Characterised by rationality, science, functionality, and comprehensiveness, physical planning was largely blueprint in nature and sought to implement relatively static master-plans which were "based on crude social theories and sought to engineer society through the technical manipulation of the physical environment" (Faludi, 1970 in Scott, 1999, pg 3). Abstract representations of space were thus created through zoning, which was the primary tool of blueprint and comprehensive planning.

Underlying the geometric and visual order presented by the ideology and the grand vision of economic progress, was an abstraction of space from the 'lived space' of the very people who were to be affected by these plans (Lefebvre, 1991). Thus, what Lefebvre (1991) refers to as 'spaces of representation' were in fact spaces that were manipulated and moulded in accordance with the values, interests, and scientific disinterestedness of a dominant White Council.

The 1934 Planning Ordnance embodied the assumptions of modernist planning: experts had the knowledge to plan comprehensively for the public good, planning would ensure a functional city that would operate efficiently to promote industrial capital development, and a Planning Scheme would order and zone urban space to control both present and future development. However, underlying these imperatives to achieve functional order were masked efforts to dictate the pattern of Black (including Indian and Coloured) settlement.

The Merebank-Wentworth Housing Scheme was the first formal residential zone to be designed with the specific intent of providing labour for the 'productive zone' in South Durban (Scott, 1999, pg 12). Indian land was appropriated from the settled Indian community in the Clairwood area, and replaced with a 'planned racial zone' (Scott, 1999, pg 13).

Thus, we see that space during this historical period was viewed as a 'container' that could be planned functionally, without considering the social and cultural constitutions of those whom it was being planned for. Ideas and actions centred very much around bringing a grand vision to life, and this was done through static and inflexible blueprint planning, under the justification of 'rationality'.

Social, cultural, and community meanings, symbolisms, and values were not in the least bit considered, and people were expected to adapt to a discourse that was removed from their social and cultural identities and way of life. It is therefore today so wondrous to note that these people who were subjected to

such inequalities in the past, indeed did adapt to their new environments, and have in turn moulded their meanings, symbols, and values into the place. Now, in a context of postmodernism and democracy, we have to consider the process of place-making not only in terms of the effects of historicality, but also in terms of current sociality, culturality, and spatiality.

2.2.3. *Postmodernism, Diversity, and the 'Multi'*

Postmodernism, when viewed in the context of a response to the historically; culturally; and traditionally-rich residents of Merewent having had been shoved; pushed; dehumanised; categorised; and classified during the period of modernism, allows us to now explore the diversity – and the expressions of this diversity – of these people. Having had been established as a mere *space* - devoid of any sort of personalisation - primarily directed toward serving the ideals of capitalism and apartheid, residents have been actively engaged in using their diversity in order to install a sense of place, consistent with that of their unique identities, into the environment of Merebank.

Planners must now, within a context of postmodernism and continual change, utilize diversity to the advantage of the people whom they are involved in planning for, in creating environments that move beyond just being spaces, to environments that are places – that is, more holistic and humane environments that are, as greatly as possible, attuned to the needs; values; and lifestyles of those being planned for.

Herein, Warf's four elements of postmodernism have value in understanding space-place relationships (2000, pg 10). These four elements include: (i) complexity – the recognition that explanations are always incomplete, (ii) contextuality – the idea that when and where things happen are central to how they happen, (iii) contingency – outcomes are shaped by many factors, and even by unintended consequences, and (iv) criticality – we should look beyond face-values, and deeper into power-relationships and hidden interests.

In keeping with the ideas of postmodernism (complexity, ambiguity, hybridity, chaos, fluidity, and confusion – to mention a few), Lefebvre's idea of *trialectical thinking* challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies. It is "disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, and never presentable in permanent constructions" (Soja, 1996). According to Lefebvre's *ontological trialectic* (that is, the trialectics of being), historicality; spatiality; and sociality form the basis of knowledge, human existence, and the nature of social being (Soja, 1996). Similarly, in the *trialectics of spatiality* – comprising of perceived space, conceived space, and lived space – these types of space cannot be separated from one another or be viewed in isolation from one another. This thus implies that any study into the space-place relationships in Merebank must, at a minimum, take into account the historical; spatial; and social relationships that have evolved – and that continue to evolve – within the area.

Place-meanings are constantly evolving and being remoulded and reshaped in terms of changing contexts, experiences, and beliefs. Thus, this thesis does not attempt to uncover any universal truths, but acknowledges that what can be known is not the be-all and the end-all of knowledge. Meanings and symbolisms have strong groundings in culture and in social beliefs, but they are also constantly being shaped by experiences of the present.

Meanings and symbolisms invested into Merewent as a place are interpreted in the light of present feelings, perceptions, and experiences – having been influenced by, and shaped by, past experiences. The aim of the thesis is not that of providing solutions to the past, but of providing a richer understanding of the cultural constitution of those who were overlooked in the past, in order to plan more holistically for the present and for the future.

Planning today must take into consideration those aspects of people that were not understood in the past. Sandercock (1998) stresses the need to embrace diversity and difference in planning. If integration is to occur successfully in South Africa – and if places are to be planned in attempts of embracing more

cultures - there is a need to begin by understanding the meanings and symbolisms that different individuals and groups of people invest into places.

Placelessness may be viewed by many, as a reality in the present day of globalization and time-space compression. However, according to Relph (1976, pg 147), "A deep human need exists for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and to allow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. If ... we choose to respond to that need and to transcend placelessness, then the potential exists for the development of an environment in which places are for man (humankind), reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience".

The attachment to place in Merewent may be seen as a response to the complexity, hybridity, and eclecticism characteristics of the present world – a re-assertion of culture and locality; a re-assertion and / or remoulding of identity; the re-assertion of community belonging. Additionally, the attachment to place in Merewent may be seen as a result of the community having had formed bonds with one another when faced with adversity during the period of modernism, and apartheid which ran parallel to modernism. Common suffering and hardship has the power to bind people, since this implies that they share some experiences that are common, thus contributing towards deepening their levels of understanding of one another. As planners, we must now attempt to understand those who have been regarded as the 'other' in the past.

The postructuralist idea (Derrida) of rejecting the idea that language can represent reality is an important one with regards to the different experiences of place, and the different meanings and symbolisms invested therein – since that which we have known has largely been a construct of western ideas, grounded in history going as far back as colonialism. Similarly, representation has been distorted by politics and the power-relations of bureaucracy (ideas of Foucault). Thus, planning has a role to play in equalising the issue of 'whose history gets told'. This can be accomplished by paying greater

attention to what Sandercock (1998) terms as "voices from the margins". The community of Merewent is an appropriate example herein.

2.3. Key Concepts relating to the Study

Discussion of the case-study, and the analysis of the material gathered, employs a number of somewhat abstract concepts – some of which can have multiple meanings depending upon the contexts wherein they are used – that need to be clearly defined. Working definitions are provided below, the aim of which is to promote clarity at the outset, and to avoid the indiscriminate use of jargon.

- ***Space***: *Existential* space as most relevant to this study. According to Norberg-Schulz (1971, pg 17), existential space has 'object character'. This implies that "... the true nature of space does not reside in the more or less extended character of sensations as such, but in the intelligence which interconnects these sensations ... space is therefore the product of an interaction between the organism and the environment, in which it is impossible to dissociate the organization of the universe perceived from that of the activity itself" (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, pg 17).

- ***Place***: A space that is invested with human symbolism and meaning, usually individually experienced in terms of a person's attitudes, experiences, intentions, and unique circumstances, but also communally experienced – "... for we are all individuals and members of society" (Relph, 1976, pg 36). They are thus 'lived spaces' – that is, "spaces of representation" (Lefebvre, 1991).

- ***Meaning and Symbolism***: conscious significance / importance invested into something in terms of ideas, thoughts, emotions, and feelings.

- ***Symbols***: things that "express other things in ways which allow their common form to be retained and shared among the members of a group, whilst not imposing upon these people the constraints of uniform meaning" (Cohen, 1985, pg 18).

- ***Community***: Cohen's (1985) idea of community: a commonality of forms (ways of behaving, shared circumstances) whose content (meanings) may vary considerably among its members. Thus, although members of a community recognize differences among themselves, they also suppose themselves to be more like each other than like the members of other communities.

- ***Culture***: the customs, civilisation, and achievements of a particular people – in this case, the 'Indian' culture.

- ***History***: experiences and events of the past, especially relating to human affairs.

- ***Identity***: in Erikson's terms, "... the feeling of seeing oneself as a 'defined self' in a socio-cultural reality that is yielded by a positive reference group, which in turn has attained its own group identity. This group identity, of which the individual, identified as a self, must represent a successful variant, is determined by the culture of that group" (Greverus in Rapoport, 1976, pg 147).

- ***Value***: a cultural fact which as a norm, has significance for members of a culture, and which acts both as a stabilizing factor for the system as a whole, and as a motivating force in the behaviour of the individual (Greverus in Rapoport, 1976, pg 149).

2.4. Summary

Space and place, and the relationships therein, have been greatly influenced by the patterns of thought during particular periods of time. During modernism, the ideologies of a dominant few were put forward into action and implemented. Merebank was created in the vision of its being a township for the supply of labour to nearby industries. No consideration was given to the health of the people who were designated to be living there. Today, this would be termed *environmental racism* – because the residents are poor and black, pollution has been occurring at unregulated levels. There is no doubt that there have been close links between the aims and intentions of modernism, and the aims and intentions of apartheid, in South Africa. If anything, modernism served to facilitate the goals of apartheid in the country.

The philosophy of idealism, in relation to the research topic, alerts us to the idea that place is not an inert or ahistoric form, but that people are active participants in the historically contingent process of place-making. The ideals of modernism and apartheid (static, rigid, blueprint planning) differ from that which may be regarded as some of the ideals of postmodernism and democracy (flexible, inclusive, collaborative and pragmatic planning).

Merebank as a place, viewed within the context of postmodernism and democracy, must be understood in terms of its transition from space to place – that is, what is it about the area that people attach meaning and significance to? What factors have contributed towards making the place special to them? How do they reflect the meanings and the symbolisms that they attach to the place through their physical and social environments? These are some of the questions that the following two chapters will attempt to answer.

CHAPTER THREE

MEREBANK: TRANSITIONS THROUGH TIME – FROM *SPACE* TO *PLACE*

"With all their temples, institutions and organisations, the Indians have created a niche for themselves on the soil of South Africa. They have lived in this country for the last one hundred and thirty plus years and have been amazingly successful in perpetuating their worldview in an alien land".

Prof. P. Pratap Kumar (2000: vii)

3.1. Background

Fundamental to any understanding of a place, are the relationships between the place and the people within the place. One cannot be fully understood without the other, as they are complementary to one another, with one reinforcing the identity of the other. A brief history of Merebank has already been provided in Chapter One of this thesis (Section 1.4.). However, the content of the present chapter differs somewhat from that contained in Chapter One, in the sense that the present chapter assumes a more *holistic* stance to the relationships between space, place, and the place-making process in Merebank.

It is the aim of the present chapter to provide a descriptive history of both the physical attributes of Merebank, as well as of the social and cultural composition and attributes of the people of the place. The logic herein is that *space* is transformed into *place*, upon its being given meaning and significance by the people who live within the place and experience its environment through their daily interactions and activities. The history of a place is thus intimately linked to the history of the *people* within the place.

In view of this, a history of the physical and *spatial dimensions of Merebank* will first be provided, before the rest of the chapter moves on to provide a

history of the *residents of Merebank*: Space + People = Place. In terms of the history of the residents of Merebank, it has been necessary to provide a significant level of detail, and to go back in time to a large extent, since the *origins* of the people in Merewent have significant implications in terms of the meanings and symbolisms that they attribute to the place today. Furthermore, it has been necessary to locate the residents of Merewent within a broader spectrum of Indians in South Africa as a whole, since Indians in South Africa have largely been subjected to the same historical events and experiences. The rest of this chapter thus progresses from that which may be regarded as a micro-level (Merebank) description, to that which may be regarded as a macro-level (South Africa) description.

3.2. Merebank: Its History

Much of the political history of the formation of Merebank has already been discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, since Merebank was created based largely upon the political imperatives arising from the power and control of a dominant white ruling class, having had been strongly influenced by imperialism and colonialism (Scott, 1994). This occurred within the context of Modernism.

The aim of the present section is to expand upon this, and to provide a description of the history of Merebank, focusing upon some of the characteristics of its physical and visual form. These aspects of the area lend themselves more strongly (although not solely) to the concept of *space*, than to that of *place* – since it is not investigated wholly in conjunction with the effects of human influence (in terms of the residents of the area), but more in terms of its *functional* aspects. The aspect of human influence, and the history of the people of the area, comes in to a greater extent within Section 3.3., before Section 3.4. moves on to provide a summary of the linkages between the two sections.

3.2.1 *The Spatial Context and the Influence of Separatist Planning*

Located approximately fifteen kilometres to the south of the Central Business District of Durban, Merebank can be identified mainly by its two prominent land-uses of industry and residential dwellings. That which is striking about the physical layout of the area is the very close proximity of industry to the homes.

3.2.1.1. *The Residential Area*

Merewent comprises the three residential areas of the Ridge, the Navy Area, and the Central Area. Merewent is a predominantly Indian area with a high sense of identity, due to long residence and communal bonds. However, this has been severely impacted upon, and segmented, by the non-residential adjacent land uses. Merewent includes higher-earning, lower-earning, as well as middle-income residents, most of which of the higher-earning residents are located in the Ridge area of Merebank. The Central Area of Merebank has the *Bombay Walk* Shopping Centre, which serves all the areas of Merebank.

3.2.1.2. *The Industries and Infrastructure*

Some of the major industries located in the Merebank district include the Mondi Paper Mill, the Shell-BP Oil Refinery, and Engen. The first comprehensive infrastructural development in southern Durban was that of a regional sewerage facility – the Southern Sewage Works – authorized in 1938 to provide for southern Durban over a fifteen-year period (Scott, 1994, pg 256). This project was, however, extended to the larger southern area of Durban over the following three decades. The large Southern Sewage Works is today still located at the centre of the Merebank residential area.

Initially, transport in the Merebank area consisted of rail and horse-and–cart, since roads were not tarred and few were little more than paths (MRA, Unpublished). After the initial hardening, widening, and macadamising of roads and the elaboration of the existing network in the southern Durban area

from 1935 – 1940, the major expenditure on roads involved ad hoc improvements to South Coast Road, in order to improve access to the industrial and residential areas of the south (Scott, 1994, pg 258). In the Merebank-Wentworth Housing Scheme, general engineering works were undertaken on a systematic basis from 1942 over a period of twenty years, according to that which the Durban City Council (DCC) believed to be 'modern town planning principles' (Bagwandeen in Scott, 1994, pg 261).

The scheme – wherein an area of 1050 acres was set out for Indians, and 238 acres zoned for Coloureds – provided for a completely new cadastral layout and road network, including sewage provision; storm water drainage; and pavements (Scott, 1994, pg 261). Constituting a vast programme of service provision and transformation of the land-use and cadastral patterns of the southern-most part of Durban, the housing scheme served to replace the relatively informal and ad-hoc growth patterns of the early twentieth century with a planned, formalized residential landscape. Thus, at the turn of the century, the Merebank of yesterday differs drastically from the Merebank of today.

3.2.1.3. *Services and Facilities*

Some of the public sector amenities in the area at present include those of health services, educational services, social services, recreational and cultural, transport services and communications. Some of the private sector amenities in the area include those of retail outlets and commercial centres (*Bombay Walk*, located in the Central Area of Merebank, is the largest shopping complex in Merebank), professional and health services, and recreational facilities. Semi-public amenities include things such as sports-clubs, religious buildings, and community centres.

In Merebank, at the turn of the century, there was no English or vernacular education. In 1913, however, a Tamil school commenced in a stable belonging to a member of the community (MRA, Unpublished). Other similar community efforts occurred in the time to come. In 1923, for example, a

meeting was held on the verandah of a shop, wherein fifteen people attended, and two residents of Merebank decided to donate land upon seeing the need for another school in the area (MRA, Unpublished). The community accepted the land where the Ganges School presently stands in Lake Road of Merebank. Classrooms were built from funds (shillings, sixpence, and pennies) collected from the community, and the labourers were the residents of Merebank. In sacrificing their time and money, and in working together, the residents of Merebank had a primary school to call their own, upon the building of the classrooms having had been completed in 1924 (MRA, Unpublished).

Aside from education having had been a priority of the Indian people in the area, another area of importance to them was that of keeping in touch with their religious and cultural roots. This comes through clearly when seen in view of the Temples that they constructed. The early settlers of Merebank used to travel to Clairwood to participate in their religious functions (some of these will be discussed in the following section of this thesis), but in 1932 – under the initiative of a Hindu Priest in the area – the people of Merebank decided to establish their own place of worship, whereupon a piece of land had been donated by a resident of the area (MRA, Unpublished).

Similarly, in the 1940's, the *Shree Parasathee Temple* – constructed of reeds and bamboos – was founded on the 2nd of February 1950 (MRA, Unpublished). As the congregation of the Temple grew, the Temple was moved to an adjoining site and was reconstructed of wood and iron. The Temple played a significant role in Festivals such as the *Kavady* Festival and the *Mariamman* Festival, celebrated by some Hindu's (these will be outlined in the following section of the thesis). In 1964, the Temple had to be relocated yet again due to the expropriation of Indian-owned land that had occurred by the DCC for the purpose of establishing the Merebank-Wentworth Housing Scheme. A piece of land was negotiated for, and a site was allocated in Barrackpur Road, whereupon a modern Temple, reconstructed of wood and iron and various Hindu deities, was installed (MRA, Unpublished).

In their growth from strength to strength, the Merebank community began plans to construct their own hall. In other townships, the Council built halls for the community, whereupon rigid control was exercised over these. One of the major focuses of the Merebank Community Centre was that of the question of health.

Prior to the establishment of the township, the residents of Merebank had no organized sporting facilities, with much of their favourite sports having had been played in Clairwood. However, after the establishment of the township, the need for sporting facilities was keenly felt, and upon the increased involvement of the community and sponsorship activities, the first Merebank Soccer League was started in 1963 at the Himalayas Road ground (MRA, Unpublished). Additionally, with the completion of the Housing Scheme, other issues came to the fore. The issue of transport, for example, led to the formation of the Merebank Residents Association (MRA). Sporting facilities had to be fought for, and the MRA together with the Merebank Sports Association (MSA) waged a major battle. As time progressed, so did the development of Merebank.

The Southern Freeway was built in 1970, and despite the initial reluctance to occupy shops in the Merebank Shopping Centre (*Bombay Walk*), it has today developed into one of the busiest commercial centres in the south of Durban. The football grounds developed into being one of the premier leagues, and schools also began to develop sporting facilities. The *Raj Mahal* Hotel, the Merebank Library and Swimming Pool were some of the later additions, which are currently still existent in the area.

3.2.2. *Township Establishment*

Merebank was a traditional Indian area, having had been pioneered by Indian farmers between 1910-1920 (Juggernath in Scott, 1994, pg 263). By about 1920, the population of Merebank was between 500 – 1 000, and the majority of the homes were constructed of wood-and-iron structures, with some of them having had been built on stilts due to the swampy nature of the area

(MRA, Unpublished). As the population of the area began to increase, a Health Committee consisting of Whites only was formed, with its headquarters located at Clairwood. Mosquitoes were uncontrolled, leading to the great malaria epidemic of 1929 – 1932. Herein, almost 50 per cent of the population of Merebank was affected, and there were no centres in Merebank to combat the disease, with people having to consult their own doctors (MRA, Unpublished). The Health Committee laid the way for the Durban Corporation to incorporate Merebank within its boundary, with the southern boundary being that of the Umlaas Canal (MRA, Unpublished). The intention herein was that of 'purifying' those areas that were regarded as being 'insanitary' – this consisted of Black, White, and Coloured occupied areas.

The Merebank-Wentworth Housing Scheme, embarked upon by the Durban City Council (DCC) on the 10th of November 1939, was a planned Housing Scheme intended to provide labour for the 'productive zone' that had been envisioned for the southern corridor of Durban (Scott, 1994, pg 263). The Scheme required the expropriation of 656 acres of land from Whites, and 629 acres from Indians, and was proposed in terms of Section 11 of the Housing Act No. 35 of 1920 (Scott, 1994, pg 263).

The Merebank-Wentworth housing Scheme, and the resultant large-scale removal of people and property-expropriation, was sanctioned and justified by the employment of "technicist conceptions of a 'planned city', based on a blueprint of improved future living conditions" (Scott, 1994, pg 263). Herein, that which constituted a low-density, unplanned, informal settlement of mixed residential and small-scale agricultural land-use (semi-rural in appearance) was replaced with a formal high-density planned Indian housing scheme. The main planning instrument that was employed for this purpose was that of zoning, implemented through the Town Planning Scheme.

This disregard for the interests of the Indian population of the area did not go unchallenged. During the 1940's, major developments occurred – for example, a Passive Resistance Campaign was staged in 1946 wherein people became more politically aware, leading to the formation of an Anti-

Segregation Council in Merebank (MRA, Unpublished). It is interesting to note that the option for the adoption of 'passive resistance' is one based upon the teachings of the great leader Mahatma Gandhi – a person who still remains an inspiration to many people – particularly Indian – today. On the civic front, the Merebank Indian Resident's Association (MIRA) continued their struggle against the authority's decision for industrial expansion on the north of Merebank, and Merebank having had been declared a slum was seen as a direct threat to the growing settlement of Indian property owners in the area.

By 1942, the Minister of the Interior had approved Merebank as part of a Coloured and Indian Housing Scheme under the Housing Act No. 35 of 1920 (MRA, Unpublished). The Natal Indian Association (NIA) protested against the DCC having had disregarded the "vested interests of thousands of Indian residents", and the concept of the Merebank-Wentworth Scheme as that of an 'Indian Village' was rejected by the Indian opposition on the grounds that it "represented the implementation of segregation in a covert manner" (Scott, 1994, pg 263). Additionally, widespread reaction from affected Indian residents led to the formation of the Durban Expropriation Joint Council of Action, wherein mass meetings were held in many parts of Durban (Scott, 1994, pg 265).

The opposition to this Housing Scheme resulted in a delay in terms of approval being given by the Central Housing Board, and after site inspections on the 3rd of February 1942, the Scheme was approved with the proviso that expropriation only be resorted to when owners were not prepared to sell at market price (Scott, 1994, pg 265). However, in carrying through with their strategy to create a 'productive zone' with surrounding housing schemes, the DCC moved for changes to Section 11 of the Housing Act, giving local authorities the power to expropriate "land for replanning or laying out an area for resale to the public for building purposes" (Bagwandeen in Scott, 1994, pg 265). The implication of this was that the DCC and other local authorities were given an immensely powerful legal weapon that could be utilised to remove entire communities. Segregation, through the expropriation of land, and the establishment of the Merebank-Wentworth Housing Scheme was thus

undertaken by the DCC in the 1940's, and the promulgation of the Group Areas Act was a further step towards segregation "in that it gave localized segregatory initiatives the force of law and made this process both compulsory and nation-wide in application" (Scott, 1994, pg 265).

By the early 1950's, the Central Area of Merebank was quite populated (approximately 6 000 people), yet there were no health-care facilities and no hall (MRA, Unpublished). By 1955, fourteen properties had been acquired in the Merebank-Wentworth area, but progress had been slow as a result of the opposition faced from Indian organisations, coupled with government restrictions on expenditure (Scott, 1994, pg 265). By 1960, the first 262 houses were completed, with 517 in progress, and 833 already approved (Scott, 1994, pg 266). The first homes in the Merebank Housing Scheme were built on Dharwar Road. By approximately 1962, an estimated population of 20 000 lived in Merebank (MRA, Unpublished). The building programme continued until 1974, with associated developments of community facilities and business sites occurring at later stages (Scott, 1994, pg 266).

Overall, the Merebank-Wentworth Housing Scheme – funded by the National Housing Commission - was an attempt to plan and create racial zones prior to the enactment of the Group Areas Act of 1950, and it paralleled a vast slum clearance scheme in the southern corridor, necessitating a rewriting of the cadastral boundaries and residential landscape of a huge portion of southern Durban. According to Scott (1994, pg 266), the ideological concern for the 'public good' was used as a rational principle of town planning in order to legitimise the actions of the DCC, but instrumentally the goal was that of transforming the geo-political form of the city along segregatory lines.

3.3. Merebank: The History of its People

In order to gain a more holistic understanding into the place-making process in Merebank, it is essential that the *people* of the area be understood – in terms of, at least, their history and their socio-cultural composition. It is, therefore, the aim of this section to provide a description of the history of the

people of the area. Herein, the roots of the Indian people in South Africa are traced back to the time of them having had come in as indentured labourers to work on the sugar-cane plantations. The socio-cultural composition of the residents of Merebank, the main economic activities that they were engaged in, some of their community endeavours, as well as some of their cultural and religious festivals are also discussed in this section.

3.3.1. *Back to the Roots: Indentured Labourer's*

One of the strong-points of South Africa is that of its extremely rich cultural diversity. In more recent times especially, there has been – and continues to be - a "profound reshaping of Western and Eastern cultures in the crucible of an African ethos" (Kumar, 2000, vii). It is true that the Indians in South Africa have, over the years, created their own Indo-African identities, but much of their identities and lifestyles have been – and still are – very closely influenced by, and tied to, those of their forefathers in India.

The labour system of slavery, as initially developed by the European colonies, was abolished by 1833 (Kumar, 2000, pg 1). However, by the mid-nineteenth century, the British Empire expanded enormously and required labour to work on the plantations in the colonies. This growing need for labour in the colonies was coupled with the poor economic conditions in India, particularly during the mid-nineteenth century. A slump in the cotton industry in India resulted in the creation of large-scale unemployment, and with the drought of the time a number of Indian labourers could not find jobs in the industrial sector or on farms (Kumar, 2000, pg 1).

As a result of the abolition of the system of slavery, a new system based upon the experience of the South American colonies was adopted. This system of *indentured labour* was attractive to many Indians since it provided an opportunity for them to seek economic opportunities beyond India. According to Huttenback in Scott (1994, pg 28), the terms of indenture – as negotiated by Britain and India – were codified in Natal Law 14 of 1859 as follows:

1) Each labourer was to receive a free passage from India.
2) Wages were set at ten shillings per month with rations and quarters.
3) The period of indenture was initially three years, but this was extended to five years.
4) Labourers were to be free from corporal punishment.
5) Medical services were to be provided.
6) Forty women had to accompany every one-hundred men.
7) A proportion of higher-ranking immigrants were to be included in each party.
8) At the end of ten years residence in the colony, labourers had the choice of (a) a free return passage to India; (b) re-indenturing for a further five years; or (c) accepting a piece of Crown Land to the value of the return passage to India.

The first ship – the *Truro* - carrying indentured labourers from India, anchored in Natal on the 16th of November 1860, after which the migrants from India abandoned the "forms and rules" traditional to their mother country, and became subject to the contract law in their new home (MRA, Unpublished). "It was in their norms of family organization that they continued to 'observe the customs of the Indian culture', and in doing so found themselves in conflict with the common law" (Simons in Scott, 1994, pg 29).

Therefore, "Armed with inherited conceptual categories of white social and cultural superiority transmitted through the process of imperialism, and reproduced in the contract itself, the white dominant group used this legal mechanism to maintain their dominance by socially constructing the identity of, and thereby marginalizing, the Indian immigrant group (Scott, 1994, pg 29). On a contradictory note however, according to Indian newspapers wherein advertisements were placed by the immigration department in Natal in order to attract labourers, they – among other things – guaranteed that "Your religion will in no way be interfered with, and both Hindoos and Mahomedans are alike protected", and the advertisement also stated that there had already been more than five thousand Indians in Natal, thus pointing to the fact that a community of Indians had already begun to develop

in South Africa (Notice, Indian Immigration Department, in Kumar, 2000, pg 2).

Despite the number of laws that were passed by the powers of the 'Protector of Indian Immigrants', however, many irregularities occurred and promises that were made to the indentured labourers were inadequately fulfilled (Kumar, 2000, pg 3). As indentured labourers became free, some of them were re-hired into the indenture system, while some of them opted to free themselves.

In 1913, Indian immigration to South Africa was ended, after the colonies joined as the Union of South Africa in 1911 (Kumar, 2000, pg 6). After having had been deeply involved in the politics of the Indian community in South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi left to India in July 1914, and V.S. Srinivasa Sastri arrived in South Africa as part of a delegation from India in 1926, whereupon he appealed to the South African Government to improve the living standards of the Indian people (Kumar, 2000, pg 6).

Upon his return to South Africa in 1927, as the Agent-General of the Government of India, Sastri played a significant role in the development of Indian education, and in 1930 the Sastri College was initiated for the purposes of Indian education (Kumar, 2000, pg 6). This visit by Sastri served the purpose of making the European community more aware of Indian religion and philosophy, as he presented a number of public lectures in many South African universities, on topics of Indian philosophy. Later educational institutions that were established, linked to efforts to promote education among the Indians in South Africa, include the Springfield Training College, the College of Education, and the ML Sultan Technikon – all of which are based in Durban.

Although the Indian population in South Africa gradually progressed as a result of new educational opportunities having had become available, they experienced a major setback when in 1950 the Nationalist Party introduced the Group Areas Act, wherein of an Indian population of about 500 000, at

least 150 000 people were relocated (Kumar, 2000, pg 7). Continuing their struggle to stake their claim for South African citizenship, a passive resistance movement was launched in 1952 as a means to oppose the Group Areas Act (Kumar, 2000, pg 7). In 1961, the South African Government declared that all Indians in South Africa were citizens of the country, and it was also during this year that the Department of Indian Affairs was created (Kumar, 2000, pg 8). The formation of a Tricameral Parliament in 1984 gave Indians some political representation, wherein the House of Delegates served to represent Indian interests in Government.

In June 1991, the Group Areas Act was removed from the statute books, setting the path for change for all ethnic groups in South Africa (Kumar, 2000, pg 8). In April 1994, the first democratic elections were held in South Africa. All of these developments have served to alter the Indian situation in South Africa over a period of time, and now the future of South African Indians is intrinsically linked with the future of all ethnic groups in the country.

3.3.2. *History of the Economic Activities of Residents*

Among those people who became free of the indenture system, some moved into rural areas to pursue gardening activities and selling fruit and vegetables, while "others pursued all possible vocations to survive in the alien land" (Kumar, 2000, pg 3).

During the period 1874 – 1911, almost 146 000 new immigrants came to Natal, in 364 ships (Kumar, 2000, pg 3). In addition to the continued immigration of indentured labour, it was during this period that a number of 'free passenger' Indians – consisting mostly of traders holding British passports, entering Natal at their own expense - also arrived at the colony of Natal (Kumar, 2000, pg 3). The majority of them came from Gujarat, wherein a number of them belonged to the Muslim religious background.

Thus, according to Kumar (2000, pg 3), during the period 1874 – 1911, three distinct categories of Indians existed within South Africa: those who were still

under the indenture system; those who freed themselves of the indenture system and took up special services; and those who came as free passengers – that is, the 'merchant class'. It was these Indian merchants who became engaged in trading, supplying groceries and other items to the Indians and Blacks. Some of the items that were imported from India for the purposes of trading through that which became known as 'coolie stores' included: rice, spices, ghee, dhall, tamarinds, tumeric, coconuts, pickles, betel-nuts, confectionery, traditional clothing, brassware, and books (Scott, 1994, pg 34).

Although the passenger Indians initially set up trading stores catering specifically for the needs of the local Indian population, within a decade of their arrival this trade expanded – as a result of the trade expertise, capital, and the initiative and drive of this merchant class - to supply a wide range of imported products that were also required by African and White residents in all parts of the country (Scott, 1994, pg 34). This posed a threat – as a result of economic competition – to the European settlers, and by 1890 the anti-Indian feeling among these European settlers had become conspicuous. According to Scott, "The biggest cause for concern amongst the whites ... was economic rivalry with the Indian merchants commanding an increasing proportion of the colony's trade" (1994, pg 35).

A philosophy of separation was thus ushered in through the dominant European influence in colonial Natal, wherein the classification of Europeans as 'us' (the insiders) and the classification of Indians and Africans as 'them' (the outsiders) became entrenched in the social consciousness of the white settler (Scott, 1994, pg 36). It was this classification - a form of racial consciousness - of Indians and Africans as 'aliens' and 'outsiders' that became expressed in the socio-spatial organization and institutional framework of the colony – based primarily upon separation and segregation of the races. Herein it can be seen that Indians were made to feel, and experience, a sense of non-belonging within the colony of Natal.

3.3.3. *History of the Socio-Cultural Composition of Residents*

The two major ports in India, from where indentured Indians were shipped, included the Madras port - which sent mostly Tamil and Telegu speaking people, and the Calcutta port - which sent mainly Hindi speaking people, while the passenger Indians / merchants came mostly from Gujarat and Bombay (Kumar, 2000, pg 9). According to Kumar, "Today nearly a million Indians live in South Africa. And nearly 80% of them are Hindus" (2000, pg 9).

The caste system has been one of prominence in India, but there was no record of the castes of the Indians who came from the Port of Madras in South India – although the caste of a person could usually be established by her / his surname (Kumar, 2000, pg 9). On the other hand, the ship-lists from the port of Calcutta did provide details of caste. For the purposes of this thesis the issue of caste is not significant, aside from two points that should be noted. Firstly, the fact that a caste system did exist among the Indian people that came from India, and secondly – "Both in the case of north Indian groups and south Indian groups, there seems to have been some mobility in terms of their caste background" (Kumar, 2000, pg 9). The Indian community that eventually settled in South Africa may be divided along cultural lines into North Indians and South Indians (Kumar, 2000, pg 10).

According to Kumar, "Although linguistically speaking there are several groups (eg. Hindi and Gujarati-speaking people in the north Indian group; Tamil and Telegu-speaking people in the south Indian group), in general all north Indians share a similar cultural milieu, while all south Indians share a similar cultural milieu" (2000, pg 11). This trend can be identified through the particular types of festivals observed by each group, and the fact that there are also distinct South Indian and North Indian architectural styles that exist in temple-building.

As regards the religious background of Indo-Africans, the Indian community may be divided mostly into Hindus and Muslims, with small groups of Christians and Parsees. Although the Christian group has largely been the

result of the nineteenth century mass conversion in India, subsequent conversions have occurred in South Africa. The present Hindu community in South Africa may be treated largely as belonging to one of four language groups – that is, Tamils; Telegus; Hindis; and Gujaratis. Kumar notes, "There seems to be a greater awareness of their respective languages and traditions at the present time than there was during their initial period" (2000, pg 11).

This thesis attempts to demonstrate how this strengthening of cultural identity is linked to the place-making process, contributes towards a person's overall sense of psychological well-being; and reinforces a person's sense of attachment to place.

3.3.4. *Community Endeavours*

In having had made strong efforts to preserve their old 'life-world', one of the first things that Indian immigrants did in South Africa, as soon as circumstances permitted, was to set up religious and cultural institutions in efforts to perpetuate their religious practices (Kumar, 2000, pg 16). In South Africa, although the government did not provide for either the educational or cultural activities of Indians, individual European employers (such as the Tongaat Group) were sometimes sensitive to the religious and cultural needs of the Indian immigrants, thus providing land and partial financial support for their activities (Kumar, 2000, pg 18). Also, many educational and cultural initiatives were on many occasions started by the leadership of one / a few community members, and support and involvement then grew to include the participation of most residents of an area. Thus, the entire Indian community was invested in contributing towards bettering their circumstances in South Africa.

A discussion of some of the community efforts aimed at promoting the educational and cultural interests of Indians in Merebank has already been provided in Sections 3.2.1.3. and 3.3.1. above, and these shall therefore not be mentioned again. However, it should be noted that community efforts in Merebank, as in many other Indian areas, have been profoundly tied with

endeavours to promote either / both the *education* of the Indian population, as well as the *culture* of the Indian population. This has been done through the building of, for instance, temples; schools; colleges; and technikons. According to Naidoo in Kumar (2000, pg 16), the Hindu community followed a dictum: "Live not in any place which is without a temple".

The early temples and schools became centres of religious and cultural activities, providing a much-needed sense of belonging to people, as members of one Hindu community. Some of the activities engaged in within these centres included the reading of scriptures, story-telling, and the staging of religious dramas. These activities still remain a large part of the Hindu religious institutions of today.

3.3.5. *Religious and Cultural Rituals and Festivals*

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into detailed discussions of the religious and cultural practices of the Indian people in South Africa – because their practices are so complex, numerous, and deep – it will be useful to have a basic understanding of some of the larger festivals practiced by the Hindu's in South Africa, in order to more fully understand the origins of some of the meanings and symbolisms that they attach to place, since it is the activities that they participate in which serve to contribute towards their overall identities and, ultimately, towards their sense of belonging in a place.

At the outset, the Indians in South Africa depended upon their own memories of their traditions. The ritual acts, prayers, chants (*mantras*), myths, symbols, beliefs, and various religious practices were brought to South Africa through the experiences of their past, wherein that which they remembered from observance and participation in India was simply transmitted to this country. Only much later, almost at the turn of the century, were some religious materials brought through visiting religious leaders (Kumar, 2000, pg 36). Some vernacular religious materials and some English translations were also brought back from India when Indian immigrants visited their relatives there. Generally, Indo-Africans have looked towards their mother-country for

cultural, religious, and educational purposes, since the apartheid laws of the country also prevented Indians from freely pursuing higher educational opportunities.

Although many South African Indians are today as westernised as any other people living in this century, their lifestyles still tend to be replete with religious actions that have arisen from their backgrounds and lifestyles in India. According to Kumar (2000, pg 48), although there is a general lack of understanding of the meanings of various ritual acts and symbols among Hindus in South Africa, this does not seem to have prevented its continuation in the country. The performance of the actual ritual then, seems to in most cases hold as great (if not more) an amount of significance as an understanding of the actual meaning of the ritual. Performance of the ritual allows for the perpetuation of the Hindu identity in a foreign land, thus making the place feel more like 'home' to Indians in the country.

In South Africa, several Hindu festivals are celebrated. Festival celebration is seen as an important occasion to bring unity among the different groups of Hindus in the country. The continuity of tradition is an important factor for most Hindus. The ritual acts in many festivals are similar, but they assume different meanings for different festivals and occasions, depending upon what it is that is celebrated and remembered in the context of a particular occasion (Kumar, 2000, pg 64).

Some of the festivals celebrated include those of *Kavadi*, *Krishna Jayanti*, *Deepavali*, and *Mariamman*. *Kavadi*, a ceremony celebrated mostly by Tamilians but including other linguistic groups as well, is celebrated for a period of ten days wherein a *Kavadi* (chariot) is carried by devotees who have taken vows for various personal reasons with a desire to derive benefit from the result of the ceremony (Kumar, 2000, pg 66). Among South African Hindus, it is common-practice that if the vow has been fulfilled, they participate in the *Kavadi* festival by carrying the *Kavadi* on their shoulders to thank the deity – the main deity worshipped during this festival is that of *Murugan*, popular among Tamils (Kumar, 2000, pg 66). In Merebank, the

Shree Parasathee Temple (as discussed in Section 3.2.1.3. above) held its first *Kavady* festival on the 16th of March 1957 (MRA, Unpublished).

Krishna Jayanti falls during July-August to celebrate the birth of Krishna, one of the incarnations of Vishnu (Kumar, 2000, pg 71). Vishnu is the God of protection in the Hindu Trinity (Singh & Nath, 1996, pg 104). In South Africa, Krishna Jayanti is more popular among the north Indian groups and, to an extent, among the Telegus. Devotees of the Hare Krishna Temple in Chatsworth, Durban, view this festival as being of particular importance, and hence play a significant role in the celebration thereof.

Deepavali, a popular Hindu festival celebrated during October-November, means "a row of lights", and both in north India and south India the festival is celebrated with rows of lights – in order to signify the triumph of the righteous over the unrighteous - the victory of Krishna over the demon King Ravana (Kumar, 2000, pg 72). This festival is usually celebrated at home, and sweetmeats are exchanged between family and neighbours after being offered to God during a prayer, in order to promote sharing and unity.

The *Mariamman* festival is associated with the Goddess *Mariamman* in India, who is in turn associated with contagious diseases such as small-pox and cholera, wherein it is believed that she has the ability to bring about both disease and healing (Kumar, 2000, pg 88). It is believed that propitiating the Goddess annually is fundamental to the well-being of the village. In South Africa, the Tamil Hindus have maintained this tradition, with the festival usually occurring in the month of April, spanning over a three-day period, beginning on a Friday and ending on a Sunday (Kumar, 2000, pg 88). The most well-known temple for the celebration of this festival is the Isipingo Temple in Durban. It is useful to note that when the *Shree Parasathee Temple* was founded in Merebank on the 2nd of February 1950 (as discussed in Section 3.2.1.3.), the first prayer that was held was that of the colourful *Mariamman* festival held in August of the same year, which thereafter always attracted large crowds annually (MRA, Unpublished).

3.4. Summary: *Space* towards *Place*

This chapter demonstrates that in order to understand a place, the physical space cannot be viewed as being separate from the people within the place, or from the people who wield the power to shape the place. The role of history is fundamental herein, as spaces change over time, according to different circumstances; visions; and ideologies. The case of Merebank serves to demonstrate that this area has been one that has been shaped not only by the residents of the area, but also – and perhaps to a greater extent, in the earlier years – by a dominant few who operated within a modernist framework to materialize their goals; visions; and ideologies of separatism and segregation. The identity of Merebank, having had been developed in terms of its being a 'productive zone' with the residential area arising mainly as a consequence of the need for labour for the industries, has been shaped by both the power of a dominant few, as well as by the determination and the spirit of enthusiasm of its residents.

In their attempts to mould the landscape of an area that was planned as a 'container' with no consideration for their social and cultural constitution, the residents of Merebank actively translated their historical identities onto the landscape by engaging in activities such as temple-building; the building of schools; etc. They also attempted to keep in touch with their religious and cultural practices by making efforts to arrange and participate in rituals and festivals that they had engaged in at their home, India.

Also, with the arrival of the merchants / traders after the arrival of the indentured labourers, the Indians in South Africa were able to settle into their normal lifestyles to a somewhat greater extent, as products such as their staple foods; spices; and traditional garb became available to them. Furthermore, close contact was maintained with India, and upon visits having had been made to India and back, people sometimes returned with some of their vernacular and sacred literature. These factors, among others, allowed for the continuance of the Indian identity in a foreign land.

With the inception of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the Indian community is amongst a diverse range of communities, all of whom now have greater freedom to engage in each of their beliefs and customs. Over a period of their many years in Merebank, the residents of the area have – through their activities and endeavours – moved towards making the area their 'home'. Having had invested meaning and symbolism into the area, they have developed attachments to the place and to one another. They have transformed a 'container' into a place that is now rich with their very own identities.

Having provided a history of the area of Merebank and a history of the people of Merebank, it is the intention of the rest of this thesis to provide an investigation into these meanings and symbolisms that the residents of the area attach to the place, and to establish how these are reflected in their physical and social environments, and in terms of their everyday lives. Chapter Four provides a detailed analysis of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

MEREBANK AS *PLACE*

"To move away from my bonds in Merebank will be very difficult. For instance, if I have got a problem – any problem – I can turn to any one of my friends here. Now if I move away from here, I will have no friends at all. Especially with my health, lots of people say that I have to move away because of the pollution, but I can't because I will be all alone and I will be depressed, thinking of the people here. At the moment, the people here come and visit me ... makes me happy".

Mrs Sharma, Resident of Merebank, 2001

"I can't exactly describe it, but I wouldn't want to be anywhere else but Merebank".

Sandeepa Singh, Resident of Merebank, 2001

"You know, if I stay at home for one day, I get sick. I have to have some interactions with the people and some activities to keep myself busy".

Mr Pillay, Resident of Merebank, 2001

4.1. Overall Analysis

According to Lefebvre (1991, pg 69), "... humans as social beings are said to produce their own life, their own consciousness, their own world. There is nothing, in history or in society, which does not have to be achieved and produced". Space, as has been demonstrated in this thesis thus far, is contingent upon time and as such, is constantly being produced and reproduced. The space of Merebank is different today in comparison to that which it has been a thousand years ago. Having been influenced by history

and by human action over the years has resulted in Merebank being the place that it is today.

Having originated as a space planned for industry and the housing of labour, Merebank has over the years been given meaning and symbolism by those who have lived within it and who have – in one way or another - invested their efforts and their very selves into it. As a result, it has been transformed into a place. People attach not only material value to it, but they attach sentimental and emotional value to it as well. For the majority of the residents in the area, Merebank has now become as much a part of their beings as facets of their own identities. They have been a fundamental component in the production of Merebank to that of its present state, and there is no doubt that Merebank is going to continue to evolve over time – it will be reproduced, and then reproduced again ...

The content of chapter three has largely served to demonstrate the links between history, space, and people. For the purposes of this study, this has been done at a micro-level – that is, in the context of Merebank and its residents, in South Durban. Lefebvre's *ontological trialectic* / the *trialectics of being* (See Figure 3) serve to re-affirm the idea that spatiality, historicality, and sociality must not be viewed in isolation from one another, but that they in fact contain each other and they should, therefore, be attempted to be understood in terms of their complementary and reinforcing natures (Soja, 1996).

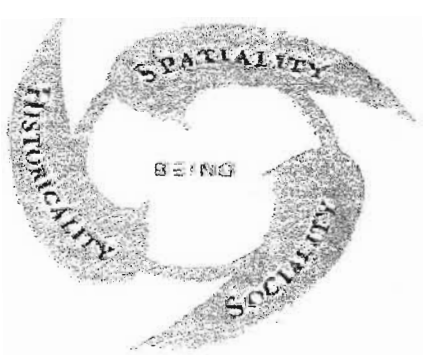


Figure 3: Lefebvre's Trialectics of Being (Source: Soja, EW, 1996)

The following two chapters move on to demonstrate that if places indeed are a fundamental aspect of man's existence in the world, and if they are sources of security and identity for individuals and for groups of people, then it is important that the means of experiencing; creating; and maintaining significant places must not be lost. This becomes especially important in the current context of postmodernity, since globalisation – and the effects thereof – tends to lead to the promotion of that which may be termed *placelessness*, as people are now more free than ever to constantly move from one place to another.

In the current chapter, Merebank as a place is explored in a manner that allows for the thematic questions which have been posed in this thesis to be investigated and analysed (See Appendix B for Thematic Questions). Thus, the themes for interrogation in this chapter are based upon the thematic questions which have served as an overall framework for the research. Merebank will be explored not only in terms of its *own identity*, but also in terms of its *resident's identity with it*, as a place. According to Matore in Relph (1976, pg 10), "We do not grasp space only by our senses ... we live in it, we project our personality into it, we are tied to it by emotional bonds; space is not just perceived ... it is lived". It is this *lived space* that will largely be explored herein, before Chapter Five proceeds to provide some conclusions regarding the implications of space-place relationships for planning.

4.2. Demographic Background

In order to gain a more rounded understanding into the responses gained from the empirical research undertaken in Merebank, it will be useful to have some idea of the demographics, in terms of the respondents who have participated in this study.

As mentioned within the *Research Methodology* section of this thesis (Chapter One), twenty in-depth individual interviews were conducted; three focus-group sessions were held; seven key respondents were interviewed; and two meetings were attended wherein the researcher assumed the role of

complete observer. The breakdown contained in this section is a reflection of the demographics of the twenty individual resident respondents.

4.2.1. Age of Respondents

As explained before, respondents were required to have been over the age of eighteen, in order to establish levels of attachment to place. Respondents – for the individual interviews - were selected across the entire adult-age (over 18 yrs) spectrum, with an almost equal number of respondents drawn from the age groups 26-45 years old (30%); 46-65 years old (35%); and over 65 years old (25%).

Table 1: Age of Respondents: Individual Interviews

Age Category	Number	Percentage
18 – 25 yrs	2	10
26 –45 yrs	6	30
46 –65 yrs	7	35
Over 65 yrs	5	25
Total	**20**	**100**

4.2.2. Gender

An even split of male and female respondents were selected – that is, 10 male (50%), and 10 female (50%).

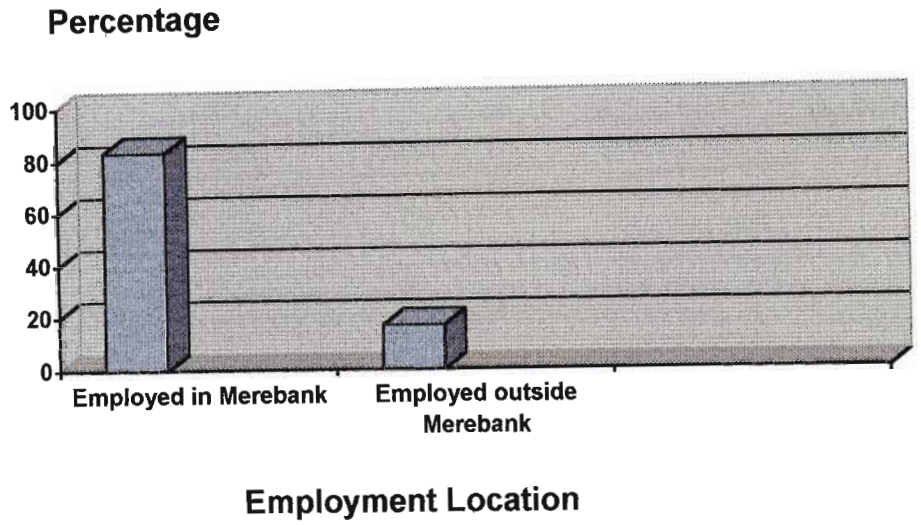
4.2.3. Job Status

The sample of respondents contained a much larger proportion of unemployed (50%), as opposed to employed (30%), people within Merebank. Twenty percent of the respondents were also retired, with half (10%) of these people – however – being self-employed (See Table 2).

Table 2: Level of Employment amongst Respondents

Status	Number	Percentage
Employed	6	30
Unemployed	10	50
Retired	4	20
Total	**20**	**100**

Figure 4: Employment Location amongst Employed Respondents



Of the six respondents who were employed, five of them worked within Merebank, with only one respondent working outside of Merebank.

Additionally, the two retired (but self-employed) respondents worked within Merebank.

4.2.4. Religious Affiliations

All of the respondents interviewed displayed strong feelings relating to the spiritual components of their identities. One way in which this was reflected was through their having had identified themselves as belonging to particular religions. Although all of the respondents have originated from *Indian* roots, and thus have a common homogeneous foundation, the heterogeneous

nature of the residents tends to be reflected through their belonging to different religions.

It must be stressed at this point, however, that although each of the respondents expressed their own identities through the religions that they each belonged to, there was a constant recurrence of the idea that they did not view themselves as persons belonging to different denominations, but they saw themselves as being a united community, wherein their religious affiliations did not serve to cause separation between them.

Table 3: Religious Affiliations of Respondents

Religion	Number	Percentage
Christian	7	35
Tamil	5	25
Hindi	5	25
Muslim	2	10
None	1	5
Total	**20**	**100**

The remainder of this chapter presents an analysis of the research findings of the primary research (individual interviews, focus-group interviews, attendance of meetings, key-respondent interviews, and observation by the researcher) and of the secondary research that has been conducted.

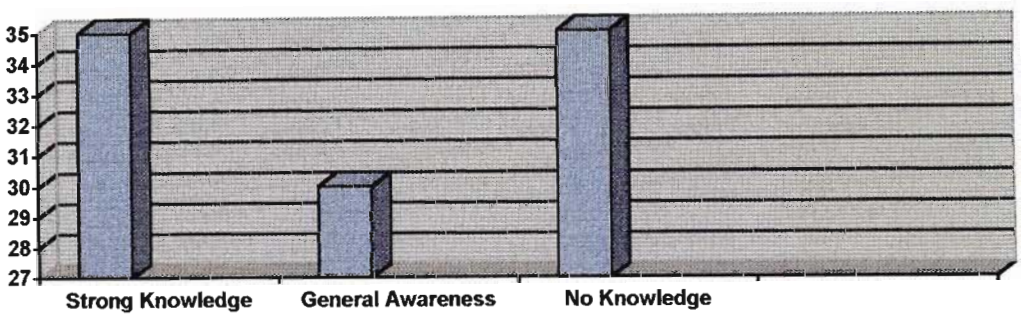
4.3. Historical Meanings attached to Place, and contributing towards Resident's Sense-of-Place in Merebank

4.3.1. Involvement of Indians in the "Struggle"

Although all of the residents interviewed were not intimately aware of the history of the area (See Figure 5), there were many who did have some knowledge of the history of the area, and this seemed to strengthen their connection to the place. For instance, a number of respondents made reference to their forefathers who had come to Natal as indentured labourers,

while others referred to the periods of the relocations and the Group Areas Act of 1950, as well as to the establishment of Merebank.

Figure 5: Respondents Level of Knowledge of the History of Merebank (%)



Level of Historical Knowledge of Merebank

As regards the above graph, a *strong knowledge* of the history of the area meant that residents had in-depth knowledge of the history of their forefathers in the area; had in-depth knowledge of the policies and implementation of segregation, as well as the effects thereof; and had great knowledge of the broader politics of the area over the years. Residents who possessed a *general awareness* of the history of the area were those who knew, very basically, that they were linked to the area as a result of past generations of family; and that racial segregation and apartheid contributed to the establishment and growth of Merebank. Thirty-five percent of respondents also simply stated that they had no knowledge of the history of the area.

There seems to be a strong correlation between the ages of the respondents and the levels of knowledge that they possess about the history of the area. Herein, those respondents who fell within the 46-65 years-old and over 65 years-old age-groups seemed to have responded more passionately about the history of the area. Accordingly, comments were made about how it had taken thousands of years to make Merebank home and about what a

mammoth task it would be to move away from Merebank and establish another place as that of *home* (Individual Interview Respondents, 2001).

On a methodological note, the focus-group interview approach seems to have worked particularly well as regards the investigation into the historical meanings attached to the place, since this approach allowed for discussion amongst the respondents, resulting in an exchange and sharing of thoughts and ideas. Here too, the emphasis was upon the effects of separatist planning, resulting in a strengthening of resident's feelings of attachment to Merebank, since they felt that they now had a 'right' to the place and they were adamant that they would not be moved against their will for yet a second time.

Additionally, discussions by residents, at the housing meeting attended, served to reflect very strong feelings of attachment to the place, linked to the history of the area (Merebank Public Meeting on Housing, June 26th 2001). Some of the main points that arose in this regard were that (i) residents felt that since they have long-standing residency in the area, it is them who should be given first preference to housing; (ii) residents felt that – over the years – they have invested their resources into contributing towards developing Merebank to its current state (in terms of the building of schools, temples, etc.), and that these assets should therefore be protected; and (iii) residents expressed feelings of having developed cultural and social values and relationships within the community as a result of their having "been through so much together", thus expressing the feeling that bringing 'others' into the community would serve to disrupt their already-established ties and bonds (Merebank Public Meeting on Housing, 2001).

Overall, the findings relating to the historical meanings attached to place, and contributing towards sense-of-place in Merebank, suggest that history – particularly in terms of planning having been influenced by the political context of the country, thus resulting in evictions of Indian residents from their land and the implementation of separatist planning – has played, and continues to

play, a fundamental role in reinforcing people's feelings of attachment to the place and in reinforcing their identities with the place itself.

It may be seen as being ironic that a place which had been racially zoned as being one for 'Indian occupation' during the 1950's, is now – during a democratic period in South Africa – meeting resistance by its Indian residents in terms of including other racial groupings as residents within the area. On the one hand, one might expect the residents of Merebank to be sympathetic and understanding towards those people who are faced with the issue of racial segregation - having experienced it themselves not so long ago. But on the other hand – as the research findings of the case of the Merebank residents demonstrates – these people have now been conditioned to view the place as being that of an 'Indian area', and they have additionally done much to the place in order to make it their home and reflect their 'Indian identities' despite the unpleasant conditions through which they were located there, and thus the large majority of them are of the feeling that they now have to protect the place that has become their own.

This may more appropriately be understood through an explanation that is offered by Cohen, wherein it is suggested that communities respond assertively to encroachment upon their boundaries because "... their members feel themselves to be under so severe a threat from some extrinsic source that if they do not speak out now they may be silenced forever" (1985, pg 109). Additionally, he goes on to argue, communities respond assertively because "... their members find their identities as individuals through their occupancy of the community's social space: if outsiders trespass in that space, then its occupants' own sense of self is felt to be debased and defaced" (Cohen, 1985, pg 109).

The findings of the research suggest that residents in Merebank have, through their having gone through common experiences and sharing socio-cultural backgrounds, developed a sense of community identity, and it is mainly for this reason perhaps that they wish not to have this identity – that has taken many years to develop to its present state – disrupted in any way.

Cohen acknowledges that for many communities, "... change inevitably means loss" (1985, pg 109). Thus, the Merebank community does not want to lose that which has now become a 'way of life' to them over the years.

4.3.2. *Great-Grandfathers, Grandfathers, Fathers ...*

The role of family-ties and bonds in the place-making process is a fundamental one in Merebank. All of the residents interviewed made mention of having family in the area, and of this contributing towards their sense of belonging in Merebank. Most of the residents feel that they are linked to the place and that it is their home. This is due to the fact that many of these current residents have had families of past generations living in Merebank, or still do have family living in the area, and they would thus like to maintain these family relationships and bonds. The close proximity of residents to their families perhaps also allows for a constant sharing in one another's lives, as well as for the easy organisation and execution of things such as family get-togethers; functions; etc.

Additionally, it has been found that houses are assets that have in some instances been passed down from generation to generation, thus serving to increase resident's feelings of attachment to the place, as they attempt to keep ownership of the 'family home' within the family.

4.3.3. *"Born and Brought-Up" in Merebank*

Of the residents interviewed, more than seventy-five percent of them had been born in Merebank, with the remainder of them coming to live in Merebank either through marriage or through other family ties. A common response to the question of what it is that makes Merebank a special place for the residents of the area was that "I was born and brought up here ... this is my home". This response may be nicely understood in light of a statement by Coles, in Relph (1976, pg 38), wherein he says, "It is utterly part of our nature to want roots, to struggle for roots, for a sense of belonging, for some place that is recognised as *mine*, as *yours*, as *ours*".

This serves to demonstrate that Merebank has become both a perceptual space as well as an existential space for its residents. In terms of it being a perceptual space, Merebank is a space wherein the residents live; project their personalities into; and have developed emotional bonds with. In terms of it being an existential space, Merebank is a space that has been undergoing constant re-creation and re-making by virtue of the activities of its residents over the years. This space has taken on sacred meanings for the residents therein, and it has therefore become replete with symbols; sacred centres; and meaningful objects, thus constituting the place-making process by the residents of Merebank.

4.4. The Role of Cultural Heritage in the Place-Making Process in Merebank

4.4.1. *Indian Leadership*

As has already been demonstrated to a large extent in Chapter Three of this thesis, the role of leadership has been a significant one in terms of Indian cultural heritage not only in Merebank, but in South Africa as a whole. The Indian community has, through time, been influenced by a number of people who have come to be considered as 'leaders', as a result of their enthusiasm and undying commitment to promote and maintain the Indian culture within that which had initially been an alien land to Indians – South Africa.

It is not the purpose of this discussion to go into the details of providing the names, etc. of those who have come to be considered as leaders over the years, since it is believed that all individuals have, in some way or the other, played roles in contributing towards the maintenance and the upliftment of the Indian culture in South Africa. However, that which should be noted are the numerous *forms* that this leadership has assumed.

The primary and secondary research conducted for this study has found that ranging from the building of schools to religious institutions; from fundraising for the undertaking of community endeavours to pioneering businessmen who

have made generous donations directed towards the promotion of the Indian culture over the years; from those who have been pro-actively engaged in the political struggles to those who have practiced quiet resistance; and from those who have been involved in the promotion of Indian languages and literature to those people who have travelled to India and back returning with religious statues (*murti's*), etc., Indian leadership has played an immense role in keeping alive the Indian cultures and traditions in South Africa.

It has partly been through this type of leadership that the Indian people in South Africa have been able to transform that which was once an 'alien space' into a *place* that they can now call 'home'. They have transposed and implanted their cultural roots from their motherland – India - onto South African soil. According to Relph (1976, pg 38), "To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular". Although not in India any longer, South Africa has been (re)constructed as home by the majority of Indian citizens within it at past and present. This (re)construction has taken time and effort, and has been constantly guided by leadership.

In Merebank specifically, leadership has over the years been enacted through the efforts and actions of individuals; groups; as well as through formal organisations and institutions. As has been mentioned before, in 1923, for example, an important community organization was born in Merebank – the Merebank Indian Association – wherefrom arose efforts to build a school on the plot of land where the Ganges School presently stands in Lake Road, Merebank, today (MRA, Unpublished). The land was donated by two residents of Merebank; the labourers for the building of the school consisted of residents of Merebank; and classrooms had been built incrementally, resulting in the completion of the school in 1924 (MRA, Unpublished). Today, the Merebank Residents Association (MRA) continues to play an active role in Merebank, dealing with a wide variety of issues ranging from, for example, environmental and housing issues through to organizing and executing the annual Merebank Fair (MRA Chairperson, 2001).

4.4.2. *Institutions and Buildings*

Chapter Three has already provided some discussion on some of the buildings and institutions that have contributed towards the cultural heritage of Merebank and its residents. These shall not be mentioned again. However, that which is significant for the current section of this thesis, and will therefore be emphasised herein, is the *nature* of these buildings and institutions.

If one has to consider the *types* of buildings and institutions concentrated upon by the South African Indian residents, it is almost glaringly obvious that education and culture were areas of primary importance to them, and it has been these areas that they have most actively been involved in promoting. This has been done, for instance, through the establishment of schools; colleges; technikons; temples; etc.

Also important to note is the fact that Indian culture and education have been very strongly linked in the past, with efforts at education being directed at not only general education, but also at cultural education. The Merebank Tamil School Society (MTSS) that overlooks the Umlaas Canal on the south-eastern flank of Durban (See Plate 1) for example, has played – and still continues to play - a vital role in the propagation of the Hindu (more especially, Tamil) cultures, rituals and languages.

Established almost ninety-seven years ago, the MTSS is not only an educational-cultural institution, but a symbol of its founder's (Mr Sanyassi Thiruvengdam Nadasen Odayar) life-long gratitude to his community after he had been rescued from the roof of the *Sri Ambalavanar Alayam* (also known as the Umbilo Road Temple) during the disastrous floods of 1905 (Post, October 17-19th 2001, pg 13; See Article in Appendix C). The original objective and reason for the founding of the MTSS was that of Tamil education, wherein the primary aim was that of teaching the Tamil language and inculcating the Tamil culture in the hearts and minds of children (MTSS Brochure, 1986).

Having had grown over the years, this basic component of the school still continues, and the MTSS has recently (on the 14th of October 2001) paid homage to its founding father when it opened a new block of Tamil classrooms and a boardroom – additions to its large auditorium and dining hall (Post, October 17-19th, 2001, pg 13). Additionally, the Merebank community today still makes large use of the MTSS Hall for the conduct of marriages and other cultural functions (See Plates 1 and 2).

Plate 1: The Merebank Tamil School Society (Source: MTSS Golden Jubilee Brochure, 1986).

Plate 2: A Classical Indian dancer at the MTSS (Source: MTSS Golden Jubilee Brochure, 1986).

It is interesting to note that remnants from the past, reflecting the Indian cultures, today still play significant roles in contributing towards the cultural

identities of Indo-Africans. A foundation stone at the Tamil School in Merebank, for example, bearing the name of the founder of the school, had been buried in rubble when the school had been expropriated to make way for Durban's southern freeway during the 1950's, whereupon the stone had later been dumped at a landfill site (Post, October 17-19th 2001, pg 13; See Article in Appendix C) (See Plate 3). Today, after the stone had been discovered and handed to the family of the founder, the foundation stone is a part of the history of Indians in South Africa at the Durban Cultural and Documentation Centre, at the University of Durban Westville.

Thus, it is evident that Indian cultural heritage, particularly through the establishment of buildings and institutions dedicated to Indian culture, has played a significant role in the overall place-making process in Merebank. The individual and focus-group interviews conducted suggest that it has served to give its residents a sense-of-belonging, and it has also served to foster and promote spiritual growth and enlightenment among these people.

Plate 3: Mr Athie Nadasen Odayar with the foundation stone bearing his late father's name (Source: Post, October 17-19th 2001, pg 13).

4.4.3. *Languages and Literature*

It has already been shown that Indian languages have played – and continues to play – an important role in contributing towards the stimulation and propagation of the Indian culture. These languages were first brought to South Africa by the indentured labourer's who arrived in South Africa for the first time in 1860.

Since then, attempts have been made to promote the Indian languages (for example, Hindi; Tamil; Urdu; Telegu; Gujarati; etc.) amongst the Indians resident in South Africa, but more especially amongst the youth and children since it is them who have in many cases first been introduced to English, in South Africa, as opposed to that of their mother-tongues. According to the findings of the interviews conducted, the older generations - on the other hand - still seem to be in touch with their mother-tongue languages to a large extent, and in many cases have learned English as a second-language.

Perhaps also worthy to note in this regard is that during the current Census count in South Africa (October 2001), Indians are being encouraged to list their mother-tongue languages as that of their spoken home-languages, since this will serve to strengthen their recognition within the new democracy of South Africa (Post, October 10-12th 2001, pg 9; See Article in Appendix C). (See Plate 4).

Plate 4: Identity through Census: A cartoon appearing in the Post newspaper, October 10-12th 2001.

In terms of Indian literature in South Africa, as has already been mentioned before, it should be noted that attempts were made to bring both original / vernacular, as well as translated texts to South Africa, from India. This served to keep the Hindu traditions and cultures alive, and to thus promote people's sense-of-belonging in this country by helping them to keep in touch with their roots.

It is beyond the scope of this study to make mention of all of the literary and philosophic works that have contributed towards the cultural and religious lives of the Indians in South Africa, but some of these include: The *Bhagavad-Gita*; the *Srimad Bhagavatam*; the *Koran*; the *Tirukkural*; the *Veda's* and the *Purana's*. The *Holy Bible*, of course, had been available in South Africa during the period of the first Indians having had been brought to the country. It is interesting to note that the Merebank Secondary School library houses copies of some of these texts, such as that of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Researcher as Complete Observer) (See Plate 5, overleaf). This serves to demonstrate that these texts still play a powerful role in contributing towards the shaping of the identities of Indians not only in Merebank, but in South Africa as a whole, thus allowing them to be more *at home* here. Furthermore, many of these books are not only religious, but secular, since they also deal with issues such as human ideals; moral issues; and political philosophy.

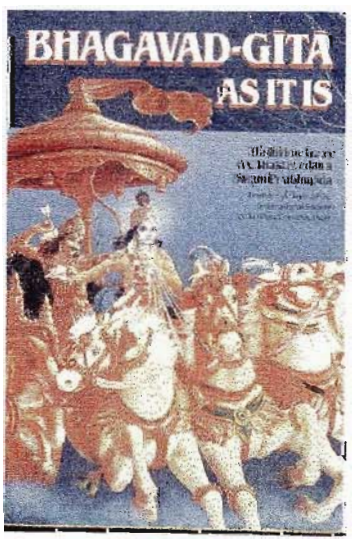


Plate 5: The front cover of the Bhagavad-Gita

4.4.4. *South Africa-India Linkages*

Another manner through which cultural-heritage has contributed, and continues to contribute, towards the place-making process is that of linkages having had been maintained between India and South Africa. Over the years, a number of scholars; priests; musicians; authors; etc. of Indian origin have travelled from South Africa to India and back, in their pursuits of learning more about their Indian roots. Upon coming back to South Africa, they have in one way or another contributed towards enriching the cultural and religious experiences of the Indian South Africans. This has served to reinforce the cultural identities of residents in South Africa, ultimately contributing towards their sense-of-belonging here.

Furthermore, some Indians in South Africa are actively engaged in the process of attempting to trace their family-roots from the 1860 indentured labourers, back to India. Accordingly, the *Post* newspaper presently carries a weekly story entitled "*Roots: taking you back in time*", which focuses upon featuring those families who have traced their roots, and who have played instrumental roles in contributing towards the upliftment of the Indian culture in South Africa (See Article in Appendix C – Post, October 17-19, 2001, pg 13).

This serves to demonstrate that people are continually involved in the place-making process, and that it is a process that is ongoing. According to Fried, in Relph (1976, pg 40), a psychiatrist investigating the effects of relocation upon a group of people from Boston's West End, it was found, "... many of them had emotional responses that could properly be described as grief ... including a sense of painful loss ...continued longing ... a sense of helplessness ... and a tendency to idealise the lost place". In the context of Merebank, as can be seen from the research findings, the residents have done as much with the space as possible in order for it to reflect their identities and personalities. Thus, in this case, the residents of Merebank have attempted to mould the landscape of Merebank to suit their own needs and to accommodate their own lifestyles, since they have chosen to be away from their original homeland of India.

4.5. The Role of Socio-Cultural Phenomena in the Place-Making Process and in Resident's Sense-of-Attachment to Place

Relph (1976, pg 52) notes that the identity of a place for planners and for policy-makers tends to follow the principles of logic, reason, and efficiency, with an emphasis upon "intellectual posture rather than (upon) emotional involvement with people and place". This suggests that planners are often unaware of the local meanings that are imbued into places by the people who are actively involved with these places and its activities on a daily basis. This section attempts to demonstrate that that which " ... helps a place come alive and hence convey a pulsating rhythm of life is the social relationships – formal and informal – that make up a sense of community" (Yeoh and Kong, 1995, pg 101). It should, therefore, be the responsibility of planners to attempt to gain greater understandings into the social and emotional meanings and symbolisms invested into places, in order for them to be able to create more holistic environments.

4.5.1. *Bonds between Family, Friends, and Neighbours*

The bonds that exist between the residents of Merebank may best be described by Tonnies (1887) idea of a *gemeinschaft* society (Walmsley, 1998, pg 3). Herein, there exists a sense of community, based primarily upon a bond of common interests that serve to hold together people who live in close proximity to one another. Primary contacts with family and friends are of a high level, and there is – correspondingly – a high level of social cohesion.

According to responses gained from the interviewees, it has been found that individuals within the Merebank community possess a sense of identity and security that arises from being part of a larger group with commonalities to themselves. This is important in terms of an individual's psychological well-being, since it significantly reduces the chances of a condition known as *anomie*, wherein "the individual becomes disturbed by a lack of any feeling of belonging and by an inability to identify with the group among whom the individual is forced to live" (Wirth, in Walmsley, 1998, pg 3). This is especially

significant during the present postmodern times, wherein societies – particularly urban societies - are becoming increasingly fragmented and characterised by virtual (as opposed to real) relationships, thus resulting in people finding it increasingly difficult to develop and foster close bonds with other people.

In Merebank, as has been found through the interviews conducted, ninety per-cent of respondents felt that they shared things in common with the rest of the people who live in the area. Some of the most prominent commonalities included things such as having friends and family in the area; experiencing a sense-of-belonging, since it was "easy to get along with everybody in the area"; a sharing of interests, such as going to Church / Temple / Mosque together; and the common experience of "suffering", due mainly to the effects of pollution in the area.

All of the respondents stated that they interacted closely with the other residents of the area, and that these people consisted mostly of friends; relatives; and neighbours. Furthermore, seventy-five per-cent of respondents felt that if they were experiencing some sort of difficulty, they would feel comfortable going to a neighbour for help, and they felt equally confident that the neighbour would be willing to offer assistance if it were within her / his means – because, as put by one respondent, "we can't think only of ourselves, we have to think of the next person" (Merebank Resident, 2001).

None of the respondents felt that the people within Merebank were unfriendly, with ninety per-cent of the respondents finding them to in fact be "very friendly". Additionally, most of the respondents knew many people in Merebank by their names, or if they didn't know them by their names then they referred to them as "aunty" or "uncle". This serves to demonstrate further the level of social closeness that exists between the residents of Merebank. This type of social cohesion between family, friends, and neighbours indeed serves to contribute towards a person's overall sense of belonging in a place, thus ultimately impacting upon their feelings towards the place itself.

4.5.2. *Cultural Identities*

Rapoport's idea of *culture* is that it is about a group of people who share a world-view, beliefs, values, etc., which are learned and transmitted, thus creating a system of rules and habits which are consistent and related (1976, pg 25). Having originated from a common Indian background does not imply that all of the resident's of Merebank share absolutely identical cultural constitutions. It has been interesting to note, however, that upon being asked the question of whether or not they associated any particular cultures with the area, most of the respondents stated that they did not. The reason for this, according to the respondents, was that no matter what religions they each belonged to, they all interacted as one and they all stood together as one.

To an outsider, however, the depth of the Indian culture in Merebank is one that is strikingly strong. There is a fervent *genius loci* / spirit of place in Merebank (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Although people in the area have different religious affiliations (Christian, Tamil, Hindi, Muslim, etc.), the Indian culture still seems to permeate their environment. This is reflected by simple things such as, for example, the types of foods sold in the area; the names of buildings, shops, roads, etc. in the area; the types of buildings in the area; the types of clothing worn; and even by the types of music that are played during routine events such as the monthly pension-payout sessions held at the Merebank Regional Hall.

According to Walmsley, "Precisely which behaviours are taken-for-granted in which places varies ... from culture to culture" (1998, pg 58). This, possibly, is the case with Merebank and its residents – they have become so accustomed to their activities and ways-of-life in Merebank that it has now become taken-for-granted by them, thus making it difficult to pin down meaning to it. This rationalization may be made clearer in viewing the types of responses gained to the following two questions:

(i) *If you had no choice in the matter and you 'had' to move away from Merebank, do you think that you would feel a sense of sadness and loss? And if so, what would this most likely relate to?*

(ii) *If you had no choice, and you 'had' to move, where is it that would you most likely move to?*

In responding to the first question, ninety per-cent of the respondents stated that they *would* feel a sense of sadness and loss. The main reasons for this had to do with leaving behind the people that they had become so attached to over the years, and the ties and bonds that they had developed with the people of the place over the years; leaving behind their homes that they had invested a lot into; and leaving behind the place in which they had spent most of their lives.

In responding to the second question, most of the respondents stated that they would like to remain as close to Merebank as possible, opting for places like Queensburgh; Yellowood Park; or the Bluff – mostly due to the lower levels of pollution in these areas. But the majority of the respondents also stated that they would not feel comfortable in these areas since – among other reasons – they would not feel free to engage in their cultural activities, functions, and festivals within these places, as a result of a lack of understanding by people of other races regarding their cultural activities and practices.

Thus, it may be seen that when looked at from within the context of Merebank itself, the residents do not see themselves as having any cultural peculiarities, but when *compared* with other people within other places, it is then that they become more aware of their cultural constitutions and its meanings in relation to the place that they are within at present, and in relation to their freedom of cultural expression in Merebank at present. There tends to be an awareness of the Indian cultural identity when viewed in comparison to other cultures, but when viewed within the realm of an Indian population itself, it is taken for granted – as the case of Merebank and its residents serves to demonstrate (See Article in Appendix C – Sunday Times KZN, November 11th, 2001).

Thus, that which may be seen as being striking to an outsider who visits Merebank, is in fact the normality in Merebank. This is important in investigating the space-place relationship in Merebank because it demonstrates that culture influences the value of things – even if it occurs at an unconscious level. According to Cohen, "... whether or not its structural boundaries remain intact, the reality of community lies in its' members perception of the vitality of its culture" (1985, pg 118). This suggests that people construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identities.

4.5.3. *Community Activities*

The activities that people engage in within their communities' serve to give us insight into their social and cultural relations within the community, and into their senses-of-belonging and identity in the community, and with the place itself.

In Merebank, it has been found that although many people are a part of groups / organisations within the area and hence expressed strong feelings of belonging within the place, those who are not a part of any groups / organisations also expressed feelings of belonging within Merebank. This may be attributed to the fact that residents within Merebank felt that they could easily interact with one another, and that even though some of them were not a part of any formal groups / organisations, they had many friends and family within the area with whom they shared many things in common, and were thus able to participate in informal activities together (Resident Interviews, 2001).

Belonging to a formal group / organisation within Merebank – such as, for example, to a Women's Group; a Sports Club; a Senior Citizen's Group; etc. – seems to provide the opportunity for people to meet on a more organized basis. Respondents who were a part of groups and organisations within Merebank expressed their sense of joy and gratitude for being a part of these groups, since it provided them with opportunities not only to socially interact

with other residents of the community, but it in many cases served to stimulate learning and a sharing of knowledge among the members of a group. According to one respondent, "Even if I already know how to do something, maybe I can (through attending a Women's Circle / Senior Citizen's Group) learn new and different ways of doing the same thing" (Merebank Resident, 2001).

People often also come together in Merebank during functions and festivals. This also serves to strengthen bonds between people, and presents opportunities for new friendships to be created. In the words of one respondent in Merebank, "I know the whole road (of people) in Merebank ... you get to know people by meeting at weddings and prayers and things, you know ... and if there's a function, almost the whole of Merebank is there" (Merebank Resident, 2001).

With regards to community activities, it has been found that the social component is but one of two components that strengthen people's feelings of attachment to place in Merebank. The other important component is that of the actual physical locations where these meetings occur at. For example, the Merebank Regional Hall is a place within Merebank that has been found, through the interviews conducted, to be significant for many people, since it is at this location that they meet for their Women's Group and Senior Citizen's meetings, etc. Similarly, many people view the Temple; Mosque; and Church within Merebank as being significant places in light of these buildings' linkages with the activities that they participate in within the community. There is, therefore, an interaction *with* - as opposed to a response *to* – place. In effect, that which occurs within Merebank is what Rapoport refers to as 'personalisation' – that is, a reciprocal relationship between place and person (1976, pg 124).

4.6. Manifestations of Meaning and Symbolism in the Everyday Lives of Residents

Activities in the day-to-day lives of people can provide important insights into how they have invested meanings and symbolisms into particular places, and into how they express their own identities; personalities; and lifestyles within their environments. Being able to freely express one's identity within the environment wherein an individual spends most of her / his time, is a vital component in ensuring the psychological well-being of the individual. In this section, some of the activities that the individuals of Merewent engage in within their environment are investigated, in terms of the relationships between people and their place.

4.6.1. *Ritual*

Rituals, on the surface, point to habitual behaviour. On a deeper level though, activities that may seem to be merely routine, in many instances serve to bring deeper meaning to the lives of those who engage in, and practice, these rituals. This has been found to be the case in Merebank, wherein there are a number of rituals that the residents engage in (Resident Interviews, 2001).

It is true that simple everyday activities such as going to work in the morning / cooking a meal for the day / visiting the shop to buy one's milk and bread for the day, may in fact be regarded as being ritualistic – by virtue of its being routine everyday practice, but for the current purposes of this thesis, some of the more outstanding and unique rituals – that are characteristic of the identities of Merebank residents - will be investigated. These assume the form of sacramental ritual.

Having had originated from Indian roots, ritual is very much a part of the lives of the Indian residents in Merebank. Even for those residents in Merebank who are not Hindu, ritual practice is still important. Christian respondents in Merebank, for example, place a great amount of significance upon the attendance of church every Sunday. This is a ritual that offers feelings of

"groundedness", feelings of "being connected to something bigger", and feelings of "being connected to others who share the same beliefs" (Merebank Residents, 2001). Churches, as well as the Merebank Regional Hall, have in this regard, been identified by some respondents as being places of importance within Merebank. While some residents do travel out of Merebank, to the Durban Christian Centre in the CBD of Durban, this is by choice as "Merebank does have churches, and services are also held at the Regional Hall" (Merebank Resident, 2001).

Ritual also plays significant roles within the lives of the Hindu residents in Merebank. Herein, there seems to be an intrinsic link between ritual and language. According to Kumar (2000, pg 95), "It is not merely how language survives ... but how ritual and language mutually depend on each other, and how language takes (on) a ritually sanctified role even when it is no longer a spoken medium". For example, it is through the process of preserving the Vedic (the *Vedas* are the most ancient Hindu scriptures) ritual that the Sanskrit language has survived over the years.

In the South African context, various Hindu linguistic groups use their vernaculars in the singing of *bhajans* (devotional songs), chants, and prayers. The ritualistic component is highlighted through the fact that even though many of the Hindus in South Africa are not aware of the actual meanings of the languages, they still use these vernacular languages during the practice of rituals. Kumar states, "The Hindu identity depends upon the ritual ... the Hindus live in a worldview in which their empirical life is transacted through transcendental means" (2000, pg 96).

Some of the ritualistic practices engaged in by the Hindu residents in Merebank were rituals that were practised at home, while others were practised at temples or the mosque. At Hindi homes, for example, an altar decorated with pictures of Hindu deities; statues; and flowers was present, wherein a lamp (*lutchmi*) was lit on a daily / twice daily basis. This, according to respondents, signifies light; purity; protection; and a destruction of evil forces within the household. Thus, the home as well as the temple and the

mosque were identified by residents as being places of importance with regards to ritualistic practices. Respondents also acknowledged that they, in most cases, practised their rituals in the Hindi / Tamil / Islamic languages – even though they were not always sure of the exact meanings of the practices and the languages used.

Thus, it is evident that ritual indeed does play a significant role in the lives of the residents within Merebank, and that these rituals are directly linked to their cultural identities. Furthermore, respondents made it clear that they felt "extremely comfortable" practising their rituals within Merebank, since they shared an "understanding", "tolerance" and "respect" that they were not sure they would have in another geographical location, with a different socio-cultural environment (Merebank Residents, 2001).

4.6.2. *Festivals and Functions*

The celebration of festivals and functions by residents within Merebank are usually religious in nature. Festival celebration is seen as an important occasion to bring unity and oneness among different groups of people (Resident Interviews, 2001). Some of the larger festivals celebrated by the Merebank residents include Christmas; *Ramadaan*; *Deepavali*; and *Kavadi* (See Plates 6 and 7). Functions usually take the form of prayers and weddings. Additionally, the Merebank Fair is held on an annual basis, and this is organised by the Merebank Residents Association.

These festivals and functions provide the opportunity for the residents to practice their own beliefs and traditions, while coming together as a community wherein sharing is seen as being of importance. *Place* herein has special significance, since people feel that they are free to celebrate their functions and festivals within Merebank. This is based primarily upon one main reason – that is, a spirit of social understanding and support between residents (Resident Interviews, 2001). To elaborate, many residents stated that had they been living in a place such as, for instance, the Bluff, they would not have felt comfortable celebrating their functions and festivals, since there

would have been a lack of understanding regarding the significance of these festivals and functions in their lives. To elaborate further, some of the festivals and functions celebrated by the Indian community tend to be "loud", and whereas they felt that they would be understood within Merebank – since most of the residents share similar practices – they were certain that they would not be understood in a place such as the Bluff.

This serves to demonstrate that place, and the meanings and symbolisms attributed to place, cannot be separated from the socio-cultural constitution, and resultant practices, of the people within the place.

Plate 6: The *Kavady* (Chariot) Festival / Ritual (Source: Kumar, 2000).

Plate 7: The Claylamp – A Symbol associated with *Deepavali* (Festival of Lights).

4.6.3. *Places of Significance*

Places of significance within Merebank, to its residents, have already been alluded to through the rest of this chapter. However, it is worthy to note that in addition to some of the more prominent places (such as, Temples; the Mosque; Churches; and the regional Hall) that have already been mentioned, other places of importance to residents included: their homes; places of work

within the area; the Bombay Square Shopping Centre; the Meremed Medical Centre; Schools; the Merebank Library; the Merewent Pool; the Merebank Community Centre; and the Sea (Refer to Plates 8 - 16).

Plate 8: The Galilee Temple-Church in Merewent

Plate 9: A banner outside the Merebank Regional Hall

Plate 10: The Mosque in Merewent

Plate 11: The Temple in Merewent

Plate 12: The Meremed Medical Centre in Merewent

Plate 13: The Merebank Library

Plate 14: The main-entrance of Merebank Secondary School

Plate 15: The Merebank Hyper-Plaza at Bombay Square Shopping Centre

Plate 16: A Residence in Merewent, undergoing extension – demonstrating one facet of resident's investment into the place

Aside from the *homes* of residents, which are profoundly linked to the very beings of the residents, the rest of these places have been found to be of importance to the residents mainly as a result of the functional purposes that they offer (Resident Interviews, 2001). However, it must be noted that in fulfilling certain functional needs and requirements of the individuals, these places in fact become places of significance to the people who utilise them. Thus, in interacting with these places, and in fulfilling their needs through this interaction with these places, residents tend to attach meaning and symbolism to them. This is an important contributory factor to a person's overall sense of psychological well-being, since it deals with the issue of convenience, thus impacting upon levels of stress, etc.

4.6.4. *Cultural Consumption*

Merebank reflects a distinct type of cultural consumption. The main types of goods consumed by people can serve to provide valuable insights into their lifestyles. This, in turn, is directly linked to their cultural identities, which can – in turn – be either supported / not supported by a place. In Merebank, it has been found that there is a direct link between the cultures of the people within the place, and between the types of products that characterise the place.

For example, some of the types of foods that could be observed when walking through the *Bombay Square Shopping Centre* included the likes of: savouries (*samoosa's*, *bhajia's*, *puri-partha's*, etc.); curries; *roti's*; etc. These are all typical of the Indian tradition and culture. Similarly, there were many spice and prayer-goods shops within the shopping centre, carrying goods such as masala's and other spices; murti's (statues of deities); sweetmeats (sweets used for the purposes of prayer); etc. (Researcher as Complete Observer) (Refer to Plates 17 - 19).

Plate 17: Savouries being sold at Bombay Square Shopping Centre

Plate 18: A spice-shop at the Bombay Square Shopping Centre

Plate 19: Spices in a shop at the Bombay Square Shopping Centre

With regards to clothing, many of the older females could be seen to be wearing their traditional garb – *sari's*, while some Muslim men and women could be identified by their traditional garb. The video-stores seemed to cater widely for the Indian audiences by keeping vast ranges of Hindi and Tamil movies, while other shops sold traditional-music cassettes and compact-disks

(Researcher as Complete Observer). Additionally, when one entered a shop, for instance, one was greeted by the sounds of Indian music playing in the background.

All of these serve to contribute towards the 'Indian atmosphere' that is so strongly prevalent in Merebank. The importance of this with regards to the subject of this thesis is that the identity of the place itself has become one that is synonymous with the identities of the people within the place. It is almost as if there has been, at some point that cannot be precisely defined, a merging of the two.

4.7. Manifestations of Meaning and Symbolism in the Physical Environment of Merewent

4.7.1. *What's in a Name?*

Names almost always have some sort of significance attached to them, and are often highly political in nature (Refer to Plate 20). Those people who have participated, and been involved in, the naming-process usually invest meanings into names. Meanings can also be inferred from interpretation. The naming of things, and the naming of places, often also has political undertones.

According to Scott (1994, pg 135), the early names given to places in the southern area of Durban provided the 'spatial and conceptual coordinates' within which settlement of the area by the early White and Indian settlers could occur, wherein the names originally functioned to constitute and differentiate portions of the southern area, thus serving the territorial ambitions of the British settlers by recreating an English landscape.

This can be demonstrated by looking at the origin of the name *Merebank*. The 'mere' was actually a mass of still water where the Himalaya Sports Ground in Merebank stands today (Merebank Resident, 2001). "The mere was covered with reeds, bulrushes, ferns, wildflowers ... wild-ducks ... and a host of other

birds" (MRA, Unpublished, 2001). Merebank, having had been originally situated adjacent to this small inland drainage area or 'lake' - which had subsequently been drained in the mid-twentieth century – took on the appellation 'mere' – naming the area after the Lake District of England, with its many 'meres' (Scott, 1994, pg 156).

Whereas the naming of *Merebank* itself serves to reveal its association with the physical features experienced by the early British settlers in England, the names of physical features such as roads, buildings, etc. in Merebank today, serve to reveal its strong association with India. The current road-names in Merebank for instance, are names that are unique to places in India – for example, *Sambalpur* Road; *Rawalpindi* Road; *Bombay* Walk; etc. Similarly, the names of buildings within Merebank have very strong associations with India – for example, the *Raj Mahal* Hotel, the *Shri Sivan Soobramoniar Alayam* Temple, or the *Bombay Square* Shopping Centre. (Refer to Plates 21 and 22).

Plate 20: The Politics of Names (Source: Post, October 31-November 2nd, 2001).

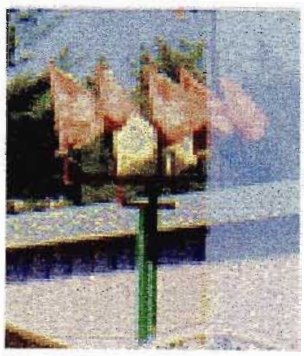
Plates 21 & 22: Road-names in Merebank

Herein, it can be seen that the *names* of places and things are also heavily invested with meaning and symbolism, thus serving to contribute towards the overall character and identity of a place. Even though Merebank originated as a place that was planned by the British, today – through something as simple as the names within the place – it demonstrates the rich cultural heritage of the place. This, in turn, reflects the identities of its residents, having had carried-through from the identities of the 1860 Indian indentured labourers.

4.7.2. *Places of Prayer*

Manifestations of meaning and symbolism in the physical environment are also reflected through – aside from the buildings of worship that have already been mentioned – prayer-places that a large number of residents have either / both in their yards and homes. This, it has been found, is largely a characteristic of the Hindu residents within Merebank.

In terms of outdoor prayer-places, one can usually observe a portion of space dedicated for the purposes of prayer. This is characterised by – in most cases – an enclosed space containing statues of deities (*murti's*); religious flags hoisted on bamboos (*jhunda's*); sacred trees; and sacred stones. Indoor shrines are also for the purposes of prayer, and usually also contain *murti's*; pictures of deities; a lamp (*lutchmi*); etc. (Refer to plates 23 and 24).



Plates 23 & 24: *Jhunda's* at outside prayer-places at homes in Merewent

It is beyond the scope of this study to go into detailed explanations of these practices by the Hindu residents within Merebank, but it is nevertheless necessary to state that, according to the findings of the research that has been conducted, these practices form an integral part of their lives, and they are able to freely express and maintain their traditional values and traditions within Merebank, thus having Merebank as a physical space reflect their cultural identities.

4.7.3. *Convenience and Accessibility*

All of the respondents within Merebank stated that they found Merebank to be extremely convenient. This was attributable to factors such as: the availability of needed services, amenities and infrastructure (health, education, water,

sanitation, etc.); the availability of religious institutions such as temples, churches, and mosques; and the availability of products (including typical *Indian* products). There were some responses, however, wherein the need for a greater amount of leisure activities was felt. The most prominent suggestion was that of the need for a cinema within Merebank so that residents would not have to travel to Chatsworth or to the CBD of Durban. In this regard it should be noted that Merebank did have a cinema (the *Natraj* Cinema) at one stage, but that this was closed down between ten to fifteen years ago (a specific year could not be established). Merebank was also viewed, by its residents, as being convenient due its close proximity to the sea – both for leisure purposes as well as for religious purposes, since many Hindu's and Christians use the ocean for prayer and baptism purposes.

Additionally, all of the respondents found Merebank to be very accessible. This was attributable to its proximity to the CBD, and the easy access afforded by the N3 freeway. However, it should be noted that although respondents found accessibility to be good, there were some respondents who also stated that there remained room for improvement in this regard. For example, there is a need for transportation from Merebank to Chatsworth (especially to the R.K. Khan Hospital), and from Merebank to Addington Hospital. This was found to be especially problematic among the elderly, as a result of many of them relying upon public transportation to get to and from hospitals for purposes of their monthly check-ups, etc.

Resident's perceptions of the levels of convenience and accessibility with regards to their places of residence are essential in investigating space-place relationships, since they offer us insight into the feelings that residents of particular places associate with their places. According to Farbstein in Naidu (1983), "Places form the settings for all the significant and insignificant events in our lives. More than just containers, they are living changing systems which support or hinder our actions, please or disturb our emotions". Overall, residents in Merebank found the levels of convenience and accessibility within Merebank to support their needs (aside from the few problems that have been

mentioned), thus ultimately contributing towards their overall sense of psychological well-being within the area.

4.7.4. *Pollution, Crime, Drugs, Vandalism*

No place is completely perfect or problem-free, even though we can – and should - strive towards improvement. Thus far, the aspects of place that have been examined have reflected the positive aspects of Merebank – the aspects that have contributed towards residents feelings of attachment to the place, and towards their overall sense of psychological well-being within the area.

However, despite the feelings of residents strong attachment to place which have come through in Merebank, it should be noted that respondents made equally passionate remarks about aspects of the Merebank environment that they perceived as being negative. These aspects, even though not overshadowing the positive elements of the place, serve to contribute negatively towards residents overall sense of psychological well-being within the place, yet they form important components of the overall character of Merebank.

The most prominent problems / negativities associated with Merebank as a place, as identified by respondents, included those of: pollution, crime, and drugs. Vandalism, although not identified by any of the respondents as being a problem, is also evident within Merebank, thus impacting negatively upon the overall image of the place (Researcher as Complete Observer).

The *pollution* problem within Merebank has many components. The most striking, and perhaps most harmful, of these is that of air-pollution (See Plate 25). As a result of the many factories in the area, for example the Mondi paper-mill and the Engen-Sapref oil refinery, the presence of dust and noxious gases in the atmosphere have now become dominant associations with Merebank. Respondents have expressed their contempt at the higher-than-international-standard levels of air-pollution in Merebank by constantly engaging in battles against the disregard of their right to live in a healthy

environment. Aside from the many health problems associated with the high levels of air pollution in the area (many respondents stated that they suffered from asthma, for example), many respondents also complained of the negative effects of dust and chemical particles on their curtains; furniture; clothing; plants; etc. Sadness was expressed at not being able to grow healthy plants, as the growth of fungi on trees and plants had become a common occurrence. Furthermore, as has been made clear by the respondents, aside from the negative aesthetic implications of dust on curtains; furniture; clothing; etc., economic costs are also incurred, as people spend more on cleaning-agents, etc.

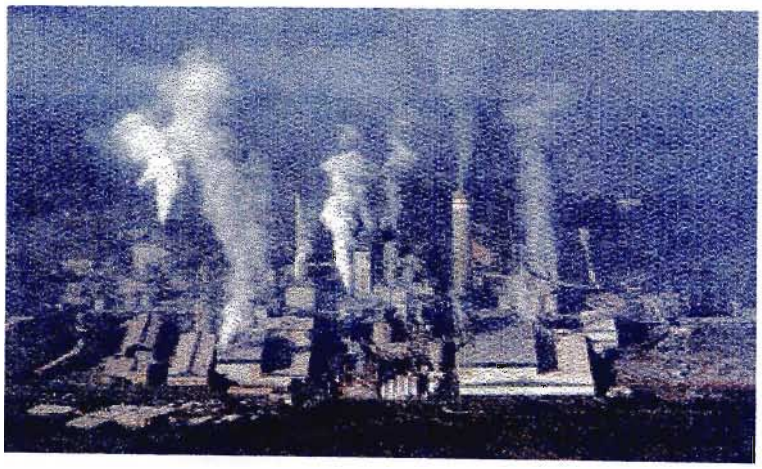


Plate 25: Air Pollution in Merebank

Noise-pollution has also been found to be very problematic within Merebank. The extremely close proximity of the Durban International Airport to Merewent renders the place very noisy, with respondents also complaining of the vibrations that the take-off and landing of aircraft caused to their windows, etc. There is also a presence of many large trucks within the area, as a result of the industries, thus adding to the noise-pollution.

Relating to the pollution problem caused by the industries within Merebank, there is also a problem relating to hygiene. Many respondents complained of, for example, the unhygienic conditions wherein food was prepared and sold by outdoor vendors at the *Bombay Square* Shopping Centre. The problem

herein was that foods, especially savouries, were prepared – mostly through the utilisation of gas-burners – outside and then displayed for sale without any form of covering on the products, thus allowing for the heavy dust and other pollutant particles present in the atmosphere to settle onto the products. The same was the case for fruits and vegetables sold outside at the *Bombay Square* Shopping Centre market.

Additionally, litter was a problem, once again especially in the vicinity of the *Bombay Square* Shopping Centre (Refer to Plates 26 and 27). One respondent also made mention of rats and cockroaches within the shopping centre locality, as a result of the litter in the area.

Plate 26: Litter within the Bombay Square Shopping Centre Area

Plate 27: Unhygienic Conditions at the Bombay Square Shopping Centre

With regards to the problems being experienced within the *Bombay Square* Shopping Centre though, it is significant to note that there are attempts being made to deal with these problems. During a meeting entitled "*Let's Make Bombay Square Business Beautiful*" – a joint initiative by the Keep Durban Beautiful Association, the MRA, Parks, City Health, Durban Solid Waste (DSW), and the Merebank Secondary School - held at the Merebank Secondary School on the 25th of June 2001, business-people (both formal and informal) operating within the shopping centre premises were encouraged to air their views and concerns, and to ask for assistance / action to be taken in moving towards the goal of achieving a cleaner environment.

This was a fundamental first step in moving towards obtaining a cleaner, more pleasant shopping environment, and the involvement of various parties, such as those mentioned above, shows that an integrated approach has been adopted. For example, upon a representative of the Informal Traders Association having put forward the issue of there not being sufficient litter-bins in the locality of the shopping centre, a representative of DSW pledged his commitment to working on the issue (Environmental Meeting, as complete observer, 2001). This meeting allowed for the identification of problems and possible solutions, making it possible for proposals to be taken forward to other major role-players, whereupon follow-up meetings were to be held. Overall, attendance by the researcher of this meeting served to reveal the commitment by some groups and individuals towards actively participating in the process of cleaning up their environment, which would ultimately contribute towards making Merebank as a whole a more pleasant place.

Crime was also seen as a problematic factor by many of the respondents, with many references having being made to vehicle-hijackings; house break-ins; and pick-pocketing. This serves to contribute negatively towards the overall image of Merebank, and it contributes negatively towards peoples overall sense of psychological well-being as well. Respondents stated that they did not find any particular places to be more dangerous than others, but that they had to constantly be on the look-out for their safety. Important to note though, is that although many of the respondents stated that crime was a

problem, they also acknowledged that this was "a problem everywhere", and that they preferred being in Merebank – as compared to other places – since they "at least knew people here" (Merebank Residents, 2001). The implication herein is that if a criminal incident were to affect the residents of the area, at least they would have the support of friends and family to help them through it.

The availability and use of *drugs* was quoted, by respondents, as being a problem affecting mostly the youth within Merebank. The high incidence of pick-pocketing within Merebank was viewed by respondents as being linked to the problem of drug-taking. A few of the respondents were aware of the locations at which one could obtain drugs in Merebank, while others felt that they did not need to know. These problems also serve to contribute negatively towards residents overall image of Merebank as a place. Furthermore, *vandalism* is evident in Merebank, especially on public property, thus again impacting negatively upon the overall image of Merebank, as it serves to lower the aesthetic quality of the place (See Plates 28 and 29).

Plates 28 & 29: Vandalism of public property within Merebank

According to Pocock and Hudson, planners and architects may perceive the design element rather than the social content of an area, thereby producing evaluations that differ from those of the residents in an area (1978, pg 69). It has been the aim of this section to demonstrate the *appraisive* responses of the Merebank residents to their physical environment – that is, the meanings attached to, or evoked by, the physical form (Pocock and Hudson, 1978, pg 68). This is important from a planning point of view, since it moves beyond evaluation *per se*, an opinion or judgement, which may incorporate general or external standards, towards also being concerned with the emotional reaction to physical place – that is, it is also concerned with the realm of attitudes; feelings; and beliefs.

4.8. Significant Symbols Contributing Towards the Identity and Personality of Merewent and its Residents

Symbols are often defined as things 'standing for' other things. However, they do not represent these 'other things' unambiguously. Rather, that which renders symbols so interesting is that they are versatile and malleable in a manner wherein they can be made to 'fit' the circumstances; views; and beliefs of the individual. Thus, according to Cohen, "... people of radically opposed views can find their own meanings in what nevertheless remain constant symbols" (1985, pg 18).

Important to note in this section is that although some basic meanings are provided in order to explain the significance of various symbols in Merebank, "Symbols are effective because they are imprecise" (Cohen, 1985, pg 21). Parts of their meanings are subjective. Therefore, symbols are ideal media through which people can speak a 'common' language, behave in apparently similar ways, participate in the 'same' rituals, pray to the 'same' Gods, wear similar clothes, etc., without "subordinating themselves to a tyranny of orthodoxy" (Cohen, 1985, pg 21). In this way, individuality and commonality are reconcilable.

The role of symbols in the place-making process is a significant one, since it allows individuals to express themselves and to – as a result of these shared symbols - feel a sense-of-belonging within their particular communities, without having to feel tied-down to any one particular meaning. Thus, although the meanings that individuals within a community attach to symbols may differ, these symbols are still shared by members of the community and are thus common to the community as a whole.

Additionally, symbols serve to enrich the place-making process, and contribute towards people's feelings of attachment to place, since they allow for the personalisation of space, thus imbuing meaning into space, allowing for its transformation into *place*.

The following are some of the symbols that have been referred to by respondents within Merebank, while others have been observed by the researcher assuming the roles of observer as participant and complete observer in the field. A few of the symbols also come from commemorative brochures associated with institutions within Merebank (such as the MTSS).

4.8.1. Symbol of Indian Culture and Symbol of Greeting

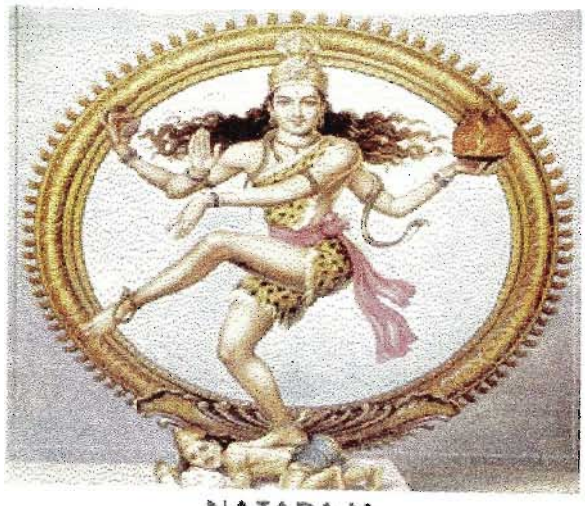


Plate 30: The Nataraja: Symbol of Indian Culture (MTSS Golden Jubilee Brochure, 1986).

"The classic Nataraja figurine enshrines all the glory and grandeur, the splendour and symphony of Indian Culture in concert and is thus revered as a universal symbol of civilization born in India ...

The Nataraja is an embodiment of the universal principles of Indian Culture:

1) FAITH IN GOD, who forms the cosmic order.
2) DEDICATION, which offers all movement of life as a love-offering to God.
3) TRUTH, which is accorded between thought, word and deed, and
4) SUBLIMATION, which purifies the body and mind and transmutes human instincts, passions and emotions into things of beauty".

Ananda, C, International Authority on Indian Culture (MTSS Golden Jubilee Brochure, 1986).

The *Namaste* symbol is a greeting of respect used by many Indian people – as could be observed in Merebank - signifying an acknowledgement of the presence of God within all individuals – that is, as if to respectfully say, "I bow down to the God within you" (See Plate 31).

Plate 31: Symbol of the *Namaste* Greeting

4.8.2. Nature-Related Symbols

The findings of the research undertaken for the purposes of this study indicate that a number of animals and plants feature as significant symbols for the residents of Merebank (Individual Resident Interviews, Focus Group Interviews, Complete Observation). For example, the elephant features predominantly in Hinduism in the form of the elephant-headed God Ganesha, wherein it is believed that this God has the ability to remove great obstacles, since he is a symbol of Supreme Power; loyalty; and strength in friendship (Munro, 1984) (See Plate 32). *Murti's* (statues) of Lord Ganesha are predominantly displayed in Hindu temples and homes, as has been observed by the researcher in Merebank. Additionally, the elephant is the national animal of India, and India is for Hindus "A spiritual country, religion governing all departments of Hindu life" (Munro, 1984).

Plate 32: The Hindu Elephant-Headed God, *Ganesha*.

Similarly, the cow is a sacred animal to Hindus, and is based upon the principle of non-violence. The cow and the calf are Hindu symbols of motherhood and purity, since it is from the cow that we obtain milk (Vatsyayan, 1984). Pictures of cows could be seen on many Hindu calendars, for example, displayed in the homes of Hindu residents in Merebank (See Plate 33).

Plate 33: The Cow as a Sacred Symbol, with Hindu Lord's Krishna and Siva.

Flowers, plants, and trees have also been found to be symbols that are significant to residents within Merebank. Flowers could be seen within both the indoor and outdoor prayer-places of Hindu residents in Merebank. It is believed that flowers are significant because they are concrete evidence of life-giving fruit and vegetable. Additionally, they are symbols of devotion to God, wherein flowers are offered to God during worship, as a symbol of the loving heart of the devotee (Individual Resident Interviews, 2001).

In a similar light, plants and trees are life-giving elements of nature, and are crucial for the maintenance of ecological balances within nature. Some of the trees that are of significance to Indian people, and which could be seen in Merebank, include: the palm / coconut (*Sal*) tree; the mango (*Bilva*) tree; the banyan (*Peepal*) tree; the syringaberry (*Neem*) tree; and the *Tulasi* tree.

Each of these trees holds their own significance, often associated with myths that have evolved around them (Vatsyayan, 1995, pg 150). For example, the *Sal* (coconut) tree is not only central and vital to the ecological cycle of the forests of Bihar and Bastar, providing vast communities with the famous Karma festival, but it is the *Sal* tree whom the mother of Buddha embraced as the Buddha was born (Vatsyayan, 1995, pg 151). The significance of the coconut tree is thus botanical, functional, nutritional, and mythical in ritual terms. Similarly, the Banyan (*Peepal)* tree is considered as being sacred, and these trees are, therefore, not cut down by Hindus. However, the exact significance of this tree is not known, other than that in the 6th century BC, the

Buddha – in order to achieve tranquillity and higher knowledge – meditated under the tree (Munro, 1984) (See Plate 34).

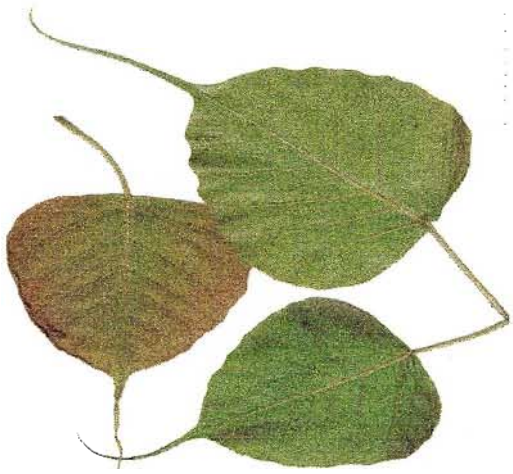


Plate 34: Leaves of the sacred *Peepal* tree

Interesting to note in Merebank was that a respondent had been the adoptee of a palm tree within the area of the *Bombay Square* Shopping Centre. For him, this tree held the simple and modest significance of his "... doing my part for the environment ... since, we take so much yet give nothing back ... it gives shade, I take care of it and maintain it ..." (Merebank Resident, 2001). (See Plate 35).

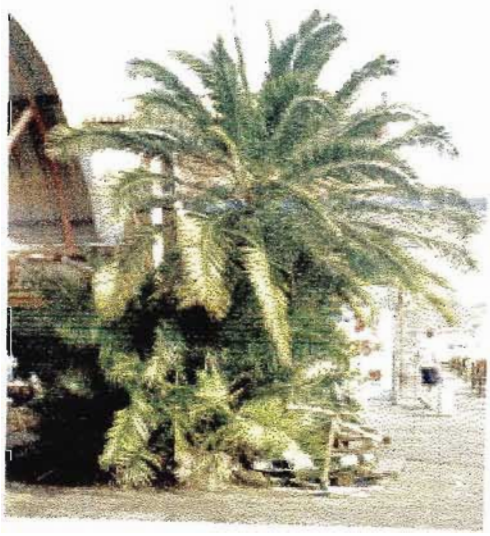


Plate 35: A Tree, adopted by a Merebank resident, at the Bombay Square Shopping Centre.

Water, also, assumes a very important part in the Hindu culture, as the River Ganges is a sacred place. The Ganges is considered by Hindus to contain numerous properties that assist in the attainment of all spiritual stages encompassed in Hindu philosophy and religious teachings (Munro, 1984). Since the Ganges is not available world-over, a stream of water is often kept in a brass vessel within the indoor shrines of Hindu homes, so that Hindu people are able to partake of all of the aspects of ancient pilgrimages. This occurrence was evident in a number of respondents' homes in Merebank (Individual Interviews, Observer as Participant). Additionally, the sea also assumes a sacred role in this regard, making the close proximity of Merewent to the ocean an advantage to the residents therein. Many respondents stated that having the sea at such a close proximity was convenient in terms of the conducting of specific prayers, etc. (Individual Resident Interviews, 2001).

4.8.3. Indoor and Outdoor Shrines as Symbol

As has been mentioned before, indoor and outdoor shrines are important symbols to many of the residents in Merebank. Each of these is itself constituted of many other symbols. For example, the *jhunda* (usually occurring in the form of green, yellow and / or red flags hoisted on bamboos) found within the outdoor shrines belonging to many of the residents in Merebank are usually associated with the deity called *Hanuman* – the deity with the face of a monkey on a human body, serving to provide insight into the multivalent dimension of Hindu tradition (Kumar, 2000, pg 54) (See Plates 23 and 24).

4.8.4. Buildings as Symbol

The Churches, Temple, and Mosque within Merebank are some of the more obvious symbols – in comparison to the others mentioned above – that serve to contribute towards the identity and personality of the place and its residents. The symbolism in these is quite obvious, since it is a means for residents to express the religious, cultural, and spiritual components of their beings. (See Plates in Section 4.6.3.).

Note also, some of the symbols associated with each of these buildings, encompassing and reflecting the cultures and religions that they are associated with, such as:

✝ - the cross of Christ, associated with the Church, and Christianity;

☪ - the Islamic sign, associated with the Mosque, and Islam;

ॐ - the Aum, associated with the Temple, and Hinduism.

Also, note the peacocks on the Temple – the peacock is the national bird of India (See Plate 11).

4.9. Psychological Impacts of the Space-Place Relationship upon the Residents of Merewent

It must not be assumed that just because people seem to accept something and adapt to it, that it is desirable and has no harmful effects upon their overall sense of psychological well-being. The fact that Merebank as a place has both positive and negative attributes to its character has already been alluded to through the course of this chapter. Therefore, the aim of the present section is not to go into detailed discussions about the psychological impacts of these attributes upon the residents of the area, but to concisely outline, in a more coherent manner, those facets of the Merebank environment that contribute towards a healthy sense of psychological well-being among the residents of the area, and those facets of the environment that contribute towards a poor sense of psychological well-being.

4.9.1. Factors Contributing Towards a Healthy Sense of Psychological Well-Being

Those factors in this study that were found to contribute towards promoting a healthy sense of psychological well-being among the residents of Merebank included feelings of: (i) a sense of community belonging; (ii) a sense of

identity as an individual, and a sense of identity with a larger constituency, such as the Merebank community and groups within the area – for example, Senior Citizen's Groups – including the freedom to express these identities; (iii) a sense of emotional and physical security in the place – although feelings of insecurity have also been expressed in this regard; (iv) the adequate levels of privacy experienced in the area; and (v) the levels of convenience and accessibility afforded by the area.

Feelings of a sense of community belonging contribute towards a person's overall sense of psychological well-being, since it ensures that the person does not feel isolated and non-belonging within the environment wherein she / he lives. This sense of community belonging is strong amongst the individuals in Merebank, with residents having strong social ties with other residents in the area. Friends, family and neighbours play important roles herein.

The residents of Merebank also exhibit strong senses of identity with the community as a whole, and as individuals themselves. This may mostly be attributed to historic and cultural reasons, as they share a common history and socio-cultural backgrounds. Additionally, they are able to freely express their identities within Merebank, since there is an understanding; respect; and caring that exists between them. The ability to freely express one's identity, and to have this identity reinforced by the community as a whole serves to strengthen an individuals overall sense of psychological well-being.

Feelings of emotional security are, to an extent, dependent upon feelings of physical safety. Although many residents within Merebank did not feel physically safe within Merebank, due to reasons such as crime and the negative impacts of pollution upon their health, they acknowledged that they still preferred being in Merebank, since it was here that they had their friends and family whom they would need in times of difficulty. Thus, even though a factor such as crime was a problem in Merebank, most residents felt that they would rather be with people that they knew and trusted when faced with a criminal act, rather than be at another place where they would have to most

probably deal with the experience without the caring and understanding of their already-established social network.

Privacy, convenience, and accessibility were also factors that were found to have positive psychological impacts upon the residents of Merebank. In terms of privacy, respondents felt that they had adequate levels of privacy within Merebank, and that living in close proximity to one another (the majority of houses in Merebank are semi-detached units, with most plots being relatively small – 250 square metres) was largely unproblematic since people respected one another. The convenience and accessibility afforded by the area also served to contribute positively towards residents' overall sense of psychological well-being in Merebank, since these factors did not contribute towards increasing levels of stress among the residents of the area. However, with increased levels of accessibility in some regards, stress-levels could be reduced even further – such as by introducing direct public transportation routes to Chatsworth and to the Addington Hospital.

4.9.2. *Factors Contributing Towards a Poor Sense of Psychological Well-Being*

The main factors that have been found to contribute towards the promotion of a poor sense of psychological well-being among the residents of Merebank include: (i) pollution, and the effects thereof; and (ii) crime in the area, and its associated problems.

Both of these factors have been found to promote feelings of stress, anxiety, and a general uneasiness among the residents of the area. Furthermore, apart from the health problems associated with the pollution in the area, the residents feel that their constant battles against the pollution in the area are not paid due attention to, thus furthering their feelings of non-acknowledgement in the area, ultimately contributing towards a poor overall sense of psychological well-being.

The high levels of crime in the area contribute towards feelings of uneasiness, stress and anxiety among the residents, since they feel that they have to constantly be on the look-out for elements of danger in their environment.

Elements of an environment that contribute towards a poor sense of psychological well-being among its residents are negative to the place-making process, yet ultimately they are parts of the overall character and image of an area. Thus, in Merebank it is evident that the positive elements of place (as mentioned above) have served to overwhelm – yet not completely overshadow - the negative elements. It is for this reason that, notwithstanding some of the negative psychological impacts that the area has upon its residents, the residents nevertheless feel strong bonds and attachments to Merebank as a place.

4.10. Synthesis of Research Findings

A space, attributed with meaning and symbolism by the people within that space, is transformed into a place by virtue of the feelings; experiences; and activities that become associated with it. The presence of a human element therefore plays a fundamental role in transforming a space into a place. Ultimately, the expression of these feelings; experiences; and activities result in a fusion of the identities of the people within the place with that of the place, leading to a sense of attachment to the place itself as well as to an attachment to other people within the place.

The case-study of Merebank has been a rich and deep one in demonstrating people's experiences of sense-of-place and attachment to place in the area. Herein, it has been found that the place-making process in the area has occurred mainly as a result of historical meanings having been attributed to the place, and as a result of the rich socio-cultural phenomena that are prevalent in the area. Additionally, notwithstanding the high pollution levels in the area, there have also been some positive physical aspects of the place that have come through, which have contributed towards people's overall sense of attachment to the place.

In terms of the *historical meanings* associated with the place, the following factors have played significant roles in contributing towards the place-making process in Merebank: (i) People having had been involved in the "Struggle" – that is, having ties from the 1860 Indian Indentured Labourers who arrived in the Colony of Natal from India, having been involved in the relocation process, and having been subjected to the separatist and segregatory planning of modernism, apartheid and the Group Areas Act of 1950; (ii) Family ties – that is, many of the residents of Merebank feel that they are linked to the area and that it is their home, as a result of their having their families of past generations having had lived, and / live in the area; and (iii) Birth – that is, many people feel attached to the place simply because it is there that they were "born and brought up", thus having lived their entire lives in the area.

With regards to the *socio-cultural phenomena* prevalent in the area, the following factors have played significant roles in contributing towards the place-making process in Merebank: (i) Strong, close ties between family; friends; and neighbours – that is, in having spent many years together and participated in activities together over these years, bonds have developed over time and people would like to hold onto these; (ii) The prevalence of a strong sense of cultural identity, belonging, understanding, togetherness, and sharing – that is, residents in the area largely share the same cultural beliefs and practices (based upon their Indian identity and heritage), and where they do not, there is a tolerance; respect; and understanding of other cultures, since they still view themselves as a single united community; and (iii) Activities within the area that contribute towards a sense-of-belonging – for instance, residents belonging to Women's Groups; Senior Citizen's Groups; Sporting Clubs; etc., thus providing residents with the opportunity to interact with one another more closely, ultimately fostering a spirit of sharing and learning from one another.

With regards to the *physical aspects* of the Merebank environment which contribute towards residents sense of attachment to place, the following have been noted: (i) Convenience – in terms of, for instance, the availability of needed services; religious institutions such as temples and churches;

products associated with the Indian culture, etc., wherein the *Bombay Square* Shopping Centre plays an important contributory role; (ii) Accessibility – in terms of, for instance, location to the CBD and the availability of public transport. However, some problems have also been noted in this regard; and (iii) The close proximity of Merebank to the sea – in terms of leisure and religious purposes.

The main *negativities / problems* associated with the place, as identified by the respondents, include those of (i) Pollution; (ii) Crime; and (iii) Drugs, and its associated problems. It has been found that although these factors do not serve to make the residents of the area feel less attached to the place, it does contribute towards their feelings of uneasiness in the place, thus impacting negatively upon their overall sense of psychological well-being.

Symbols associated with the merging of the identities of the people and the space of Merebank have also been identified, since these serve to, in a practical manner, reflect some of the meanings and symbolisms attached to the place by the residents of the area. Although some of the symbols that will be discussed in this thesis have not been identified by the respondents themselves, but rather by the researcher assuming the role of complete observer in the field, it should be noted that people are sometimes so immersed in their activities and lifestyles that they tend to take for granted these symbols - thus being less aware of them than, for instance an outsider who is unfamiliar with their practices and lifestyles. Nonetheless, some very distinctive symbols have been identified by the resident's themselves.

Overall, it has become clear from the findings of the research that there indeed are very strong attachments to place in Merebank, and that the space-place relationship serves to contribute towards a person's overall sense of psychological well-being.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PLANNING INITIATIVES

"All meanings are historically situated. This historical contingency is rooted in the fact that meanings, including place meanings, take the form they do because of the conditions in which they are formed. To understand place meanings thus requires an understanding of these conditions".

Rotenberg 1993:xiv in Yeoh and Kong (1995: 16)

"Being inside is knowing where you are. It is the difference between safety and danger, cosmos and chaos, enclosure and exposure, or simply here and there. From the outside you look upon a place as a traveller might look upon a town from a distance; from the inside you experience a place, are surrounded by it and part of it".

Lyndon 1962:35 in Relph (1976:49)

5.1. Towards a Wrap-Up

The complexity of the place-making process in general, and in Merebank in particular, has been demonstrated in chapters two, three, and four herein. The philosophy of idealism has been pertinent to this study in that it has served to demonstrate that place is not only the concrete setting for human lives and activity, but that it is a socially constructed entity that is invested with human meaning and symbolism.

Thus, a space transformed into a place, occurs through the process of both individuals and groups of people attributing deeper meaning and significance to the space, rather than regarding the space merely in terms of its being able to satisfy its functional purposes. The creation of spaces and of places occurs over a period of time, and is a continual process. Herein, places are not only

defined by the people who interact with them (in the case of this study, Merebank being defined by its residents), but places are also influenced and shaped by the forces and the powers of others (for example, by the visions and ideologies of a dominating group during the modernist and apartheid era in South Africa).

The fact that place is not an inert or an ahistoric form, but that people are active participants in the historically contingent process of place-making has been demonstrated in chapters three and four. Whereas chapter three has demonstrated how Merebank as a place has been shaped by both the actions of its residents as well as by the actions of a powerful white class who held the power to take decisions during the period of apartheid and modernism in the South African context, chapter four has focused exclusively upon the ways wherein the residents themselves have shaped the space wherein they live in order to make it their *place*.

The period of modernism, in the South African context, has been linked to the goals and objectives of apartheid, wherein separatist planning played an instrumental role in creating spaces that were designated to particular groups of people, based primarily upon the racial constitution of people. Modernism, associated with rigid; static; blueprint-type planning, formed the foundation upon which to further the visions and ideologies of those concerned with promoting unequal development, geared primarily towards furthering their own interests. Space, within this context, was something that was used in order to promote separation and segregation, with spaces being created as containerised entities.

Merebank, having had been created as an Indian Township through the implementation of the 1950 Group Areas Act in South Africa, has been an excellent example of a space that was formed with blatant disregard of the social; cultural; and historical attributes and identities of the people who were to be housed therein. With economics being the main driving force of the time, southern Durban was being developed as an industrial core, with Merebank

having been established in terms of its being an area that would house labour to work in the industries in the area.

Although the people who were to be housed within Merebank were people with a rich and unique (to South Africa, at the time) socio-cultural and historical background and constitution, no attempts were made in the realm of planning to incorporate their needs into the planning process. Planning was thus something that was largely separate from those people who were being planned for, with there being no recognition and acknowledgement of diversity among people.

More recently, however, in a South African context of democracy and postmodernism, there has been a visible shift towards embracing diversity. This has involved acknowledging the existence of difference among people. According to clause 15 in the *Bill of Rights*, Chapter Two of the South African Constitution, "Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion" (Act 108 of 1996, pg 8). Furthermore, people have a right to the freedom of expression. Similarly, "Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being" (Constitution, 1996, pg 11).

It must be the role of planners, in a post-modern democratic context, to make sincere and concerted efforts to understand as wide a range of people, whom they are involved in planning for, as possible. It is only through understanding people – their lifestyles, their values, their beliefs, their cultures, their histories, etc. – that planners can be equipped to plan people-sensitive environments, and to take into due consideration some of the meanings and symbolisms that people have attached to places over the years.

Chapter three, having had served to provide a description into the origins of the Indian history and culture in the context of indentured labour in South Africa, has served to demonstrate the origins of some of the meanings and symbolisms that residents in Merebank attach to the area (Chapter Four). The

place-making process in Merebank has been one that has been complex. It is this very complexity that is a significant characteristic of postmodernism.

Hence, although this thesis has attempted to venture as deep as possible into understanding the space-place relationships amongst individuals in Merebank, it is also acknowledged that explanations are always incomplete. The researcher has largely played the role of interpreter – that is, interpreting elements of the place-making process such as attitudes; values; beliefs; and perceptions. The process of interpretation is not something that can be completely objective either, yet every attempt has been made to be as objective as possible.

Contextuality is another factor that is significant in attempting to understand the relationships that exist between space and place, as well as in attempting to understand individuals feelings of sense-of-place and attachment to place. In a post-modern democratic context in South Africa, for example, the residents of Merebank are largely of the feeling that they have to now hang on tightly to the space that they have over the years transformed into a place that they can identify with, and within which they have developed strong social bonds. Thus, it is evident that in a period which is characterised by hybrid cultures; hybrid identities; and the increased ability to move freely from place to place, some people (as in the case of the residents of Merebank) in fact make concerted efforts to retain their original cultures and identities, and to even reinforce them. *Place* is very significant herein, in that it allows for people to express their identities and cultures in a concrete (through symbols, for instance) as well as in a social (through community activities, for instance) manner. Place allows people to feel grounded in a world that is presently otherwise characterised by fluidity and constant change and movement.

In post-modern times particularly, feelings of sense-of-place, and the resultant attachment to place, among residents of an area are especially important to an individuals overall sense of psychological well-being, since they contribute towards promoting feelings of belonging; identification with the familiar; and freedom of expression with lower risks of being misunderstood, as compared

to if they had been in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people and surroundings. The creation and development of place-bonds – both in terms of attachments to the place itself, as well as to the people within the place – involves interactions between the individual and her / his environment to such a profound depth that the identities and personalities of the individual and the place seem to merge as one.

Overall, as can be seen from the case of Merebank, people's relation to space – and experience of place – is inseparable from their own socio-cultural and historical constitutions. The place-making process is influenced by the constitutions of the individuals within the place, and the place – in turn – serves to either reinforce / conceal the identities and personalities of the people within the place. In this study, it has been very clear that Merebank as a place serves not to conceal / obscure the identities and personalities of its residents, but to very strongly reinforce it. This has been achieved by the people of the area literally projecting their own identities and personalities onto the physical landscape, thus resulting in a moulding of the landscape to reflect these identities and personalities. There is, therefore, a very strong interaction between people and place in Merebank.

5.2. Responding to the Hypothesis

Based upon the findings of this study, the hypothesis posed in Chapter One (Section 1.5) of this thesis has been found to be true. History, culture and sense of community indeed *are* profoundly linked with an individual's experience of place, thus allowing her / him to attach meaning and symbolism to place. This, in turn, ultimately contributes towards a person's overall sense of psychological well-being.

"Although physical attributes are an obvious reason why structures are known, neither prominence nor architectural detail guarantee imageability and a place in the perceiver's mental mode" (Pocock and Hudson, 1978, pg 31). Thus, it is the attribution of significance that gives meaning to neutral environmental happenings. As such, for space to become place, senses other

than the visual, and meanings other than the concrete, have to be invoked. Physical or visual form is identified or given meaning through a combination of usage (functional), emotive (values involved), and symbolic (ideas and sentiments represented) significance.

As the case of Merebank has served to demonstrate, historical; cultural; and social meanings attributed to place are of key importance to an individual's overall experience of place. Place meanings draw upon interpretations both of the past and of the present, and there is no singular meaning ascribed to a place, nor a singular way of deriving those meanings. All places and landscapes are individually experienced, for individuals by themselves see them through the lens of their own attitudes; experiences; intentions; and unique circumstances. Simultaneously though, place provides individuals with the opportunity to identify with a community who has similar characteristics to oneself, without restricting the individual to any uniform meaning. On the one hand, there may be as many meanings in a place as there are individuals. On the other hand, the individual's perceptions and attitudes are influenced by the society and place to which she / he belongs.

Common histories and cultures serve to bring people together by virtue of their resultant common understandings of one another. Having had experienced significant events together serves to bind people in a manner that cannot be understood without delving into the emotions and perceptions of the people concerned. In the case of the residents of Merebank, for example, being the products of those who were involved in the struggle during the colonial and apartheid years has served to give the people in the area a common grounding. Similarly, having experienced being located there through the separatist planning of apartheid has rendered people to share a common experience of inequality and exploitation, thus ultimately contributing to the bond that these people share today. Furthermore, at present, residents in the area share a bond that cannot be completely understood by an outsider to their experiences in, and with, the area. For example, they share the common experience of high levels of pollution in the area, and they share the experiences that come from fighting for a healthier and cleaner environment.

It is the commonalities like these that contribute towards peoples bonding with one another. This type of bonding, through understanding and sharing certain common experiences, is a contributory factor to social ties and networks that ultimately develop between individuals in places. Other contributory factors include having family and friends in the area. It is in this manner that people develop attachments to places – that is, by virtue of developing attachments not only to the place itself, but also to the people within the place.

The attachments that people develop to places are ultimately critical to their overall sense of well-being. Places are not abstractions or concepts, but they are directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world, and are hence replete with meanings; with real objects; and with ongoing activities (Relph, 1976, pg 141). Places are important sources of both individual and communal identity, and are often profound centres of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties. Places, once attributed with meaning and significance by those within it, offer people a sense of identity; security; belonging; and feelings of being at one with themselves and their environment.

Having had established that history, culture, and sense of community are intimately linked with an individual's experience of place, thus allowing her / him to attach meaning and symbolism to place, which ultimately contributes towards a person's overall sense of psychological well-being, the question then becomes: What is the role of planning, and of planners, in all of this? The following section provides some brief implications in answer to this question.

5.3. What does this mean for Planning, and for Planners?

Essentially, we have to make efforts in moving towards creating *places*, instead of *spaces*. This will require professionals of the built environment to more actively integrate the perceptions and feelings of the people that they actually plan for into the overall planning process, since people's perceptions of their own state of well-being is an important, yet often neglected, aspect of the planning process. In spite of what statistics might indicate in terms of

levels of well-being, it is actually the individual's perception of her / his own environment, and sense of well-being within that environment, that must be paid greater attention to.

A pathway to achieving this end is that of planners playing a more active and effective role in listening to the needs and to the feelings of those that they are engaged in planning for. This will enable planners to learn about their 'clients' to a greater degree, and to thus plan environments that will be more suitable and sensitive to the requirements of those that they are planning for.

This will involve a move away from technicist-focused planning, towards planning that is more holistic, taking into consideration socio-cultural and historical factors, relating to people and their places, to a greater extent. This is especially important in the context of South Africa, since there are many legacies that have been left behind from the injustices of the past.

As an individual who is now going to go out into the planning profession myself, for example, I will attempt to become more aware of the types of people that I will be involved in planning for in different situations and circumstances. This will include learning about the different lifestyles, values, practices, etc. of different people to a larger extent than that of my present breadth and depth of knowledge. This, I think, will enable me - as a planner - to embrace diversity, and to plan – to as great an extent as possible – accordingly.

In order for this to be successfully achieved, it will be essential that increased levels of community participation be encouraged throughout the cycle of the physical planning process. The main reason for this is that the urban planner may be aware of her / his own goals and aspirations for an environment, but may be quite misinformed about the goals and aspirations of the people that she / he is planning for. Thus, involving the community / communities concerned will serve to create situations based upon more equilibrium and balance.

Additionally, planning should move beyond looking at the mere face-value of things, towards delving deeper into the meanings and symbolisms of these things. Symbols in a place, for example, can offer interesting and valuable insights into the meanings that people attach to the place, which in most cases will be based upon their own identities and personalities. In other words, planners should move towards becoming more insightful by, for instance, deconstructing landscapes in order to understand the various elements – and the meanings behind the elements – therein.

These implications may seem idealistic to an extent, since practising planners are themselves best aware of the limitations and constraints that they are faced with in terms of, for example, time; costs; resources; etc. Yet, at the same time, these are very real issues and concerns that should be taken into consideration to as great an extent as possible, if more humane environments are to be created and developed in order for people to be able to nurture the physical; emotional; mental; and spiritual components of their beings.

Essentially, a place cannot, and should not, be viewed as separate from that of the people within it. Overall, planning directed at yielding places that are vibrant and rich will require an *integration* of the different needs of different groups of people and individuals. A starting-point is that of understanding the needs of these different groups and individuals, to at best as one's ability allows.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF RESPONDENTS AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

Individual Interviews Conducted

(1)	Mrs Samuel	- 115 Junagarth Road
(2)	Vivendren	- Surada Place
(3)	Mr Vishnu Singh	- Satara Road
(4)	Mr S Padavatan	- 88 Rawalpindi Road
(5)	Mukesh	- Gadwal Road
(6)	Sandeepa Singh	- Sambalpur Road
(7)	Mr P Singh	- 31 Gauhati Place
(8)	Mr Ahmed Sheik	- 11 Hubli Place
(9)	Mr B Reddy	- 51 Amarkot Crescent
(10)	Mr J Naidoo	- 14 Hubli Place
(11)	Indrin Govender	- Sampalpur Road
(12)	Mrs R Thandroyen	- 15 Howrah Road
(13)	Candice	- Buldhana Road
(14)	Mrs Moodley	- Baroda Road
(15)	Mrs Sharma	- 34 Bidar Road
(16)	Mrs Behari	- Howrah Road
(17)	Mrs Naicker	- 33 Bhuj Road
(18)	Mrs Reddy	- Amarkot Crescent
(19)	Maureen Naidoo	- Dinapur Road
(20)	Rajan	- Sambalpur Road

Key Respondents Interviewed

(1)	Professor Tim Quinlan	- ISER, UDW – Anthroplogist (via. e-mail response)
(2)	Umsha Naidoo	- MRA Co-ordinator
(3)	Mr Tex Pillay	MRA Chairperson, Policing Forum, Pension Forum, Health Committee
(4)	Mr Vishnu Singh	- Merebank Secondary Governing-body, Merewent Sporting Club.

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(3)	Mr Tex Pillay	MRA Chairperson, Policing Forum, Pension Forum, Health Committee
(4)	Mr Vishnu Singh	- Merebank Secondary Governing-body, Merewent Sporting Club.

(5)	Mr M Naidoo	- Merebank Pension Forum + other community-issues
(6)	Mr M Sewsunker	- Merebank Pension Forum + other community-issues
(7)	Mr Bobby Naidoo	- Ex-treasurer of the Merebank Ratepayers Association

Focus Groups Held

(1) *Daffodils Senior Citizens Group* (Mr MP Gounden – 119 Junagarth Rd; Mrs M Govender – Amarkot Crescent; Mrs V Pillay; Mrs T Chetty – 3 Nagpur Place; Mr J Pillay – 60 Parbani Road).

(2) *Women's Circle Group* (Mrs M Pillay; Salatchee; Mrs Govender; Mrs Govender; Mrs Samuel; Mrs Naidoo).

(3) *Pensioner's Group* (Mrs Chetty – 80 Amarkot Crescent; Mrs Devi Govender; Mr Singh; Mr Maharaj; Mrs Sheik).

Meetings Attended (Complete Observer)

(1)	"Let's make Bombay Square Business Beautiful"	- June 25th.
(2)	Housing Public Meeting	- June 26th.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

DATE: TIME:
RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:
RESPONDENT NO.: NAME:
OCCUPATION: AGE:
DRIVER / NON-DRIVER: HOBBIES:

Introduce topic, objectives, and what I'd like to achieve from my research and the interview. Explain that the respondent's identity will remain confidential.

It must be noted that although the following questions have been divided thematically, many of them are in fact overlapping and inter-relational, and may therefore, in fact, also be logical if they fell under one / a number of the other themes as well.

General

(1) For how long have you been living in Merebank?
- Same house?
- Same area?

(2) Why / how did you come to live here? Via. family (birth) / relocation / choice?

(3) Are you happy living in Merebank?
- If not, what do you dislike about the place?

(4) Would you like to move away from Merebank?
- Why / Whynot?

(5) If you had no choice in the matter and you **had** to move away from Merebank, do you think that you would feel a sense of sadness and loss?
- If so, what would this most likely relate to?

(6) If you had no choice, and you **had** to move, where would you most likely move to?
- Why would you choose this place to move to?

Merebank as a 'Place', and Cultural Composition Effects

(7) Do you think that Merebank has a character and a personality that makes it different from other places?
- If so, what about Merebank, do you think, makes it different from other places?

(8) When you think about Merebank, are your thoughts more about the **physical aspects** of it (such as roads, shops, industry, etc.) or about the **people** in the place?

(9) Do you associate any particular culture(s) with the area?
- If so, what culture(s) is / are these?
- From your experience, how is this culture expressed in Merebank?

(10) Do you think that the shops in the area cater for any specific cultural needs that you may have (such as particular food-types, prayer-goods, etc.)?

(11) Can you describe in a few lines the atmosphere / mood that you associate Merebank with?

(12) How would you say that the meanings and symbolisms that *you* attach to the place, reflect themselves in the physical environment of Merewent? ie. Is there anything that you do / have done with the physical environment in order for it to reflect *your* identity?

(13) Are there any particular **symbols** you'd like to mention, that reflect your personality and identity, and that makes you feel more at home in Merewent?

Social Relationships and Ties

(14) Do you feel that you share things in common with the people who live here?
- If so, in what way(s)?

(15) Do you interact closely with other residents' of the area?
- If so, are these people mostly **relatives**, or **friends**, or **both**?
- If they are friends, did you'll become friends while living here?

(16) If you were experiencing some sort of difficulty, would you feel comfortable going to a neighbour for help?

(17) Generally, do you think that the people in your area are friendly?

(18) Do you know many people in your area by their names?

(19) Are you a part of any social groups / clubs in the area – such as sports-clubs, women's groups, senior-citizens groups, etc.?

- If so, what group / club do you belong to?
- Is it a **formal** or an **informal** group / club?
- How does belonging to this group make you feel?

(20) Who do you consider as being your leaders / representatives of the area?

- Are they easily accessible when you need them?

Lifestyle and Place-relatedness

(21) What activities do you most engage in within the area?

(22) In your daily life and activities, which are the places of importance to you in Merewent?

- Which places, within Merebank, do you most visit / spend most of your time at?
- For what purposes do you visit these places / consider them as being important (for eg. Recreation, religion, shopping for daily needs, etc.) ?

(23) Do you celebrate any traditional festivities / functions – such as *Deepavali*, *Kavadi*, *Eid*, *Christmas*, *Prayers*, *Weddings*?

- If yes, do you feel comfortable celebrating your traditional festivals / functions in the area?
- If not, why?
- Do you think that you would feel comfortable celebrating these festivities and functions in another area, such as Brighton Beach / the Bluff?
- If not, why?

Choice, Convenience, Accessibilty

(24) Do you think that Merebank offers you **convenience** – for instance, in terms of shopping, recreation, educational needs, health needs, etc.?

(25) Does the area offer you enough **choice** – such as in entertainment, shopping, recreation, etc.?

(26) Do you regard Merebank as being an **accessible** place – viz. in terms of proximity from the CBD, other places of importance to you, etc.?

Psychological Sense-of-Well-being

(27) Do you constantly worry about the safety of yourself / your family / your home / vehicle in the area?
- If so, why?

(28) Do you feel physically safe in Merebank?
- If not, do you associate any particular areas with feelings of danger? Name these places. Why do they make you feel this way? (drugs, crime, etc.)

(29) Do you feel emotionally secure living in Merebank?
- If not, what are some of your main fears / worries / anxieties about living here?

(30) Do you feel any stress associated with the area?
- If so, what elements of the environment bring on this feeling?

(31) Are there any particular places / buildings within the area that makes you feel most at ease / happy?
- If so, could you name these places / buildings?

(32) What about the area makes you feel most happy and content?

(33) What about the area makes you feel most uneasy / unhappy?

(34) Do you feel a sense of **community belonging and identity** in the area, or do you feel **isolated and non-belonging**?
- What, do you think, makes you feel this way?

History and Historical Meanings

(35) Are you intimately aware of the history of the area?
- What historical meanings do you associate with the area?

(36) Do you have any memories (either through direct experience / stories being told to you / teachings in school / readings) of the past that you associate with Merebank?
- If so, do these memories strengthen your feelings of attachment to place?

(37) Is there any specific experience / story / poem / drawing, relating to your experience of sense-of-place with the area that you would like to share?

FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEWS

- Introduce topic of discussion, purpose, and what I hope to achieve.

---

(1) In your opinion, what are the links between history and your current experiences of place and the place-making process in Merewent?

(2) What roles does / do your culture(s) play in making Merewent the place that it is today, and in enabling you to identify with it as being 'home'?

(3) List eight things that contribute to your feelings of sense-of-place in Merewent – ie. what makes Merewent special to you?

(4) What are the places within Merewent that you consider to be most important in terms of your everyday lives?

- Do these relate in any ways to your cultural identities? And if so, in what ways?

(5) In what ways, do you think, have you shaped / reshaped the physical environment of Merewent in order to reflect your identities and personalities?

(6) Are there any particular symbols relating to your cultural identities that are reflected in your immediate home-environments, as well as in the Merewent-environment as a whole?

- If so, (i) what are these? (ii) what do they mean to you?

(7) What about Merewent makes you feel happy?
What about Merewent makes you feel unhappy?

NB: for both of the above, you may consider things such as sense of community belonging; identity; security; convenience; privacy; the effects of pollution; etc.

KEY-RESPONDENT INTERVIEWS (COMMUNITY MEMBERS & LEADERS)

(1) In your opinion, what has the role of history been in the establishment and formation of Merewent to its present stage?

(2) Why do you think that people live in Merewent?

(3) From your interactions with the people of Merewent, do you think that the meanings and symbolisms invested into the place are more a result of the physical and natural environment, or of socio-cultural phenomena?

- Why do you say this?

(4) What are the kinds of issues that you are most involved in dealing with as a representative of the Merewent community?

(5) What about representing this community makes it worth your time and efforts?

(6) Are there any significant symbols that you can think of, that contribute to the identity and personality of Merewent and its residents?

(7) What, in your opinion, are the positive qualities of Merewent?
What, in your opinion, are the negative qualities of Merewent?

(8) Where would you like to see Merewent as a place, together with its residents, in 15 – 20 years time?

- Do you think that this can be achieved? What makes you say this?

TIM QUINLAN INTERVIEW (ANTHROPOLOGIST)

(1) From your experience, what would you say transforms a space into a 'place' for people – ie. what are some of the things that give space meaning for people?

(2) In your opinion and experience, what roles do history and cultural heritage play in making places assume meaning and significance for people?

(3) What, do you think, are the relationships between socio-cultural phenomena; place; and impact upon a person's overall sense of psychological well-being?

(4) From your experience, do you find that people attach more importance to socio-cultural phenomena, or to the natural / physical environment, in the place-making process, and in their formation of attachment to places?

APPENDIX B: *Thematic Questions Relating to what the Research Hoped to Achieve*

QUESTIONS	PURPOSE	RESEARCH METHOD
What role did history play in the establishment and formation of Merewent?	Examine the historical links between the current experience of place and the place-making process.	Primary: Interviews and focus-groups. Secondary: Texts on the History of South Durban.
What role does cultural heritage play in the place-making process here?	Establish the impacts of cultural influences in the place-making process.	Primary: Interviews and focus-groups, religious-group pamphlets, etc.
Are the meanings and symbolisms invested into Merewent a result of the physical / natural environment, or a result of socio-cultural phenomena?	Determine which aspects of the Merewent environment are more forceful in contributing towards residents feelings of sense-of-place.	Primary: Interviews and focus-groups; Community Meetings.
How do people's meanings and symbolisms manifest themselves in the everyday lives of the people?	Get a feel for the daily activities of people in terms of places of importance / most visited / most time spent at; links to cultural consumption and identity.	Primary: Interviews and focus-groups + complete observation.
How do people's meanings and symbolisms manifest themselves in the physical environment of Merewent?	Investigate the links between sense-of-place and physical space.	Primary: Interviews and focus-groups + complete observation in the field.
Are there any significant symbols that contribute to the identity and personality of Merewent and its residents?	Investigate the role of symbols in place-making.	Primary: Interviews and focus-groups; observer as participant; complete observation in the field.
What facets of the Merewent environment contribute towards either a healthy sense of psychological well-being, or a poor sense of psychological well-being?	Establish the links between sense-of-place and psychological well-being, viz. sense of community belonging; identity; security; convenience; privacy; pollution effects; etc.	Primary: Interviews, focus-groups, newspaper articles.

APPENDIX C: NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Mail&Guardian April 28 - May 4, 2000, p7

Stink over SA's foul air

Children close to refineries south of Durban suffer high levels of asthma

Paul Kirk

Top civil society organisations and NGOs are petitioning the government to tackle the massive pollution problem caused by South Africa's four petrol refineries.

The petition, which is being sent to several government departments and ministries, demands written responses to the memorandum by June 1 2000 explaining what will be done about air pollution from the refineries.

The memo also demands the government "highlight ways in which civil society and the government can co-operate to allow development to take place within a framework that fosters sustainability, clean production and works towards clean energy production and alternatives for the future".

The bodies behind the petition include the Wildlife and Environment Society, the Legal Resources Centre and the Western Cape Environmental Justice Networking Forum, and the Pietermaritzburg-based NGO Groundwork, which has co-ordinated the move. Other signatories include the Sasolburg branch of the National Union of Mineworkers, the South African National Civics Organisation and the Sasolburg ANC Youth League.

In South Africa, air pollution is not controlled by legislation. A study by the University of Natal medical faculty found that children in suburbs south of Durban — which have two of South Africa's four oil refineries — are up to four times more likely to suffer from chest complaints than children from other areas of the city. South Africa's other two refineries are in Cape Town and Sasolburg.

In Scandinavian countries, a typical oil refinery will produce at the most two tons of sulphur dioxide gas in a day, while in South Africa oil refineries produce as much as 82 tons of the noxious gas every day. Sulphur dioxide helps form acid rain and significantly worsens asthmatic attacks, especially in the young and the elderly.

One of the petition organisers, Bobby Peek, said this week: "We have been fighting this battle since 1994 and to date the government has not responded in an appropriate way. All we have is self-regulation. Self-regulation is like asking a bulldog not to eat a slice of beef you put in front of it."

Peek said the bodies are unhappy with the pace at which the government is addressing the air pollution problem and said it is hoped the memo, which addresses specific incidents, will result in some action.

Among the more noteworthy incidents mentioned in the report are:

- In August 1994, the Caltex refinery in Cape Town made a public statement that it would reduce its emissions of sulphur dioxide by 80%. Caltex reneged on this commitment. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism did little to work with Caltex and the community to implement this commitment, which would have resulted in a major improvement of the environmental conditions for residents neighbouring Caltex. The lack of a positive response by the government has resulted in the local community lodging a formal complaint with the Human Rights Commission.
- On February 27 1996, the then deputy minister of environmental affairs and tourism indicated that an independent team of technical experts would evaluate the current guidelines for emissions from oil refineries. Several meetings took place between the chief air pollution control office and the communities, but nothing ever materialised and the commitment by the deputy minister was never implemented.
- In February 2000, after the South African Petroleum Refineries in Durban admitted to incorrectly calculating their sulphur dioxide emissions, the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) and GroundWork again called for a review of emission standards for oil refineries. This review should take place at a national level in an inclusive manner to attain agreed-upon standards for emissions and the procedures for the monitoring of these emissions. To date the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has not responded to this request.
- In October 1999, the Legal Resources Centre, the legal representatives of the SDCEA and the Tableview Residents Association, submitted to the minister of environmental affairs and tourism a memorandum: *Complaint Concerning Violation of Constitutional Right to Environment with Particular Reference to Failure to Regulate by the Chief Air Pollution Control Office*. To date, no formal response has been received from the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism to this detailed historical breakdown of community concerns. Once again, an independent review of refinery emission standards was called for, as well as stronger ambient air quality standards, source emission control, air quality monitoring and pollution movement modelling.
- In October 1999, the Group for Environmental Monitoring mandated the Legal Resources Centre to respond to the plans for expanding the oil refinery at Sasolburg. The centre's submission raised various concerns, inter alia the environmental risk the expansion project posed for the broader public as a result of already high pollution levels in the Sasolburg and Vaal Triangle area, and the "failure to adequately investigate and assess the significance of the possible impact of the proposed project". Although there have been significant exchanges of correspondence and meetings, there have been no substantive solutions forthcoming from the government to address these concerns.

Peek said the group wants legally enforceable air pollution limits to replace the guidelines that date back to the Air Pollution Prevention Act of 1965. "All we want at the end of the day is environmental justice."

He said the memo would be delivered to the government by the end of April.

Large-scale pollution: South Africa's refineries produce as much as 82 tons of sulphur dioxide gas every day, leading to a high incidence of serious chest complaints

'Our health is suffering'

Paul Kirk

Anne Jones has lived in Wentworth all her life and she now wants out. Like her mother and sister, she suffers from asthma. As a nurse she knows the fumes she breathes in from the refinery did not give her the condition, but they do make it worse.

"Sometimes, especially at night and in summer when it is hot and humid, the smell is not even bearable. Most of Wentties sleep with their windows shut. You suffer from the terrible heat, but you have to do it in order to keep the smell out. The smell gets into your lungs and it feels like someone is squeezing the air out of your body. It is terrible. You just want to die," says Jones.

Apartheid-era town planning saw the poorest communities of Durban — Wentworth, Austerville and Merebank — develop next to the port's two refineries. The white suburbs nearest the refineries are all situated much higher than the Indian and Coloured suburbs — ensuring white people had to breathe in the least pollution and are affected the least.

"As a kid I can remember everybody around me in my class suffering from flu and chest pains. I can remember coughing up this thick, oily muck every time I tried to run. I can remember collapsing into a wheezing mass if I tried to play sport."

Jones says you can see Wentworth is polluted by simply looking at the walls and curtains of the suburb.

"We painted the house last year and already the paint is stained. Our curtains are also buggered, we have to wash them every week to keep them white, the smog and muck stains them black. And if this pollution does that to curtains, what does it do to your lungs?"

She says residents of the area suffer from constant severe chest complaints. "Doctors will tell you that the pollution does not cause asthma, and so on. They will tell you that it will exacerbate a chest complaint, but not cause one. Well, the thing is that many people have ruined their health by living next to the refinery. I plan to get out of here as soon as possible. I no longer have to stay in Wentworth because of the colour of my skin. I no longer want to have to live with an asthma pump in my hand and suffer every night."

SUNDAY TRIBUNE, DECEMBER 3RD 2000, pg 14

Uproar over pipeline

An outcry over plans for a gas pipeline through a residential suburb has forced Engen and Sasol to reconsider, writes **Farhana Ismail**

MEREBANK residents have flatly rejected a plan to build a gas pipeline to replace the present fuel oil pipeline which runs under the suburb.

"There is no compromise. We don't want a gas pipe running through our suburb," they say.

Engen and Sasol want to build a multi-million rand pipeline for the supply of methane-rich gas from Sasol Gas to the Engen refinery in Wentworth.

But Merebank residents say the piping of the gas poses environmental risks. The gas is highly flammable and pipes are prone to leaks.

Engen and Sasol say that replacing the old fuel oil pipeline, which passes under Merebank, will reduce air pollution in the suburb.

Sasol initially chose to build the 2 000 metre pipeline underneath Travencore Drive ("proposed route" on the map) in Merebank, but after protests from the community found an alternative route, the Southern Treatment Works Route ("alternative route"). This crosses through sewage water works and would be built close to homes.

But the residents don't want either option and say they have not been properly consulted. They have laid a complaint with the Department of Environment and Tourism and have taken legal advice.

Local doctor and environmental campaigner Dr Bharuth Sitaram, a member of the Southern Durban Coalition of Environmental groups, asked why Engen and Sasol failed to show the predicted emission level of sulphur dioxide or any pollutants, if the gas pipe line was installed.

Sitaram is conducting research on incidents of disease in the community due to emissions from Engen. In August, several children were diagnosed as suffering from cancer.

Engen, as Sasol's client, takes limited responsibility in carrying out an environment risk assessment for the pipe. Community leader Ranjan Deonath said the alternative route was unacceptable.

"An environmental catastrophe could be planted on our doorstep. The local communities have suffered the brunt of failed environmental assessments. Our people are dying. Engen is saying the building of the pipe will give us jobs. But we prefer our health to money. We are not going to sit back and allow a gas pipe to run through our suburb."

Engen's communication manager Barbara Manson says the revised proposal represents an even lower risk than the original one.

"The benefits of substituting gas for fuel oil will outweigh the risks."

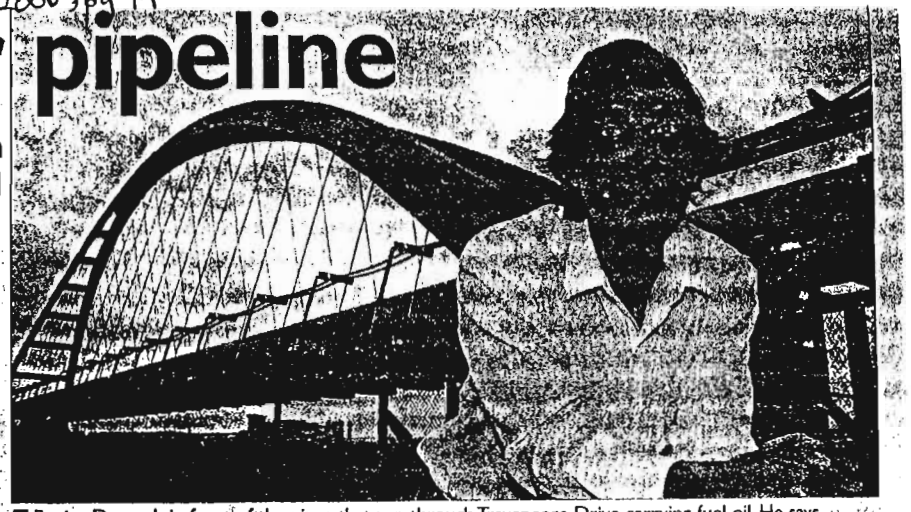
Mark Woods, a specialist environmental consultant for Sasol, said at a public meeting last month that people expressed the view that the route through the sewage works provided a greater buffer between the pipeline and residential areas.

Woods added that after investigation they found the community was correct to reject the Travencore Drive option.

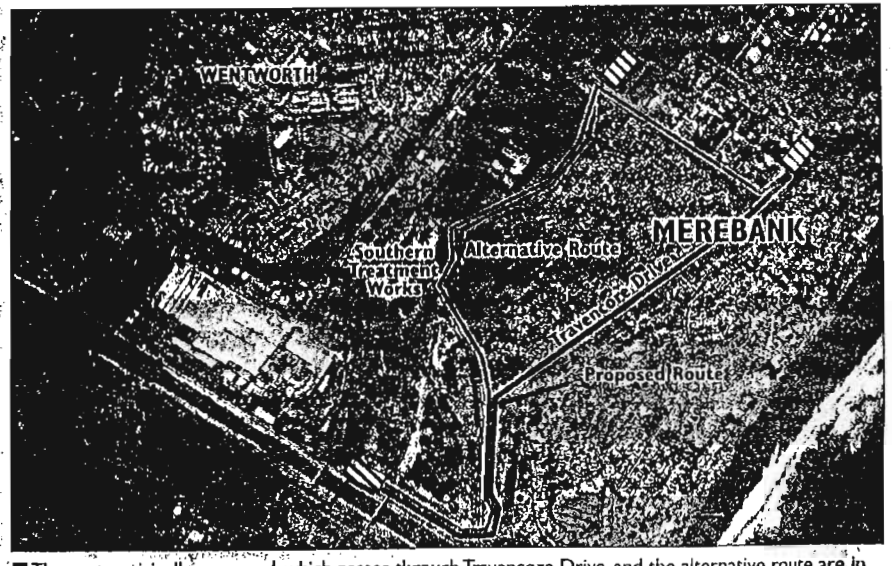
"While both routes can be built to meet international standards, the consequences of an accident would be lower in the event of a pipe rupture for the alternative route."

Sasol spokesman Alfonso Niemand said the company would consult the community. "We want a happy community. Simple as that."

The community has until next Monday to respond.



■ Ranjan Deonath in front of the pipes that run through Travencore Drive carrying fuel oil. He says residents would prefer their health to Engen's promises of jobs *Picture: KHAYA NGWENYA*



■ The route originally proposed, which passes through Travencore Drive, and the alternative route are in close proximity to residents of Merebank and Wentworth. Residents are bitterly opposed to either route.

SUNDAY TRIBUNE: APRIL 15TH 2001, pg 7

Merebank community win interdict in pipeline battle

FARHANA ISMAIL

THE long-suffering community of Merebank scored a victory against industry this week in its struggle for a pollution-free living environment.

Represented by the Merebank Environmental Action Committee, the people secured a court interdict against the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and Sasol.

The department is interdicted from making a decision on Sasol's proposal to run a methane gas pipeline through Merebank to Engen's refinery in Wentworth until it allows the community to present its submissions on why construction of the pipeline should be prevented.

However, at the same time that the order was granted, the department announced that it was granting Sasol permission to build the high-pressure pipeline.

Engen says using gas instead of fuel oil will reduce its noxious sulphur dioxide emissions from 39 tons a day to about 18 tons.

The court action culminated aft several months of community pr tests against the proposed pipeli route.

Rajah Naidoo, of the action comm tee, said in an affidavit last mon that the committee objected to Saso permit application, saying it w defective and incomplete.

He also said that the departme had not heard the submissions of t committee.

The community objected to t pipeline on the basis that it was ha ardous and imposed immense ar irretrievable health and environme tal risks to the residents and their su rounding environment.

"At the very least we had a legi mate expectation that our concer on these issues would be considered Rajah said.

Representatives of Sasol and t department could not be reached f comment.

An Engen spokesperson referr the **Tribune** to Sasol for comment.

THE INDEPENDENT ON SATURDAY, APRIL 14th 2001, pg 2.

'Matter of privacy'

Neighbours object to family's plan for prayer roo[m]

One man's desire to build a prayer room on his own property has sparked the neighbourhood's wrath, writes KIM ROBINSON

MR ISHWAR Mungaroo and his family of five recently bought a double-storey home in a quiet *cul-de-sac* in Glenashley, Durban. With a large area at the back, Mungaroo decided to build a private prayer and meditation room for his family.

Having a family all of driving age also meant six cars lined up in the driveway so, when Mungaroo decided to build the prayer room, he designed a concrete-covered carport as part of the plan. His idea was to have the 17sqm prayer room on top of the 120sqm carport.

Mungaroo applied to Durban's Development and Planning Department for permission to build. The advertisement went into the daily newspapers on March 2 and Mungaroo's neighbours reacted in shock and disbelief.

Instead of referring to the structure as a prayer room or shrine, it was called a temple, and the residents say they had visions of carloads of worshippers invading their privacy.

The discontent in the road intensified when Mungaroo started building, and residents filed 27 objections with Development and Planning.

They objected to, among other things, the size of the structure, the "erosion" of their privacy, the "possibility" of increased traffic and of property values decreasing.

"I don't know why my neighbours don't want to associate with me. I don't know if it has to do with my colour," said Mungaroo.

Development and Planning Executive Director Jacqueline Suban said that, including the parking, the structure did take up 120sqm but the prayer room was only 17sqm.

"Originally, there was no objection as it was for private and not public use. But then the issues of the neighbours were understandably raised," explained Suban. The residents now have 21 days to appeal and objections need to go to the city's Town Planning Appeal Board.

Permission

But, while permission has been granted for the extensions to Mungaroo's home, the building plans have not yet been approved and Mungaroo should not have started building, Suban said.

Mungaroo has started building the concrete slab, a storeroom and laundry. Suban said when building was not halted, a "stop work" order was issued.

"If he insists on carrying on, we will have to get an interdict," said Suban. She added that, if the residents won their appeal, Mungaroo had a right to appeal against the judgment.

"A temple for public access [is] viewed in a different light and [goes] through a different process, but [a] prayer room should be only ab[out] 17sqm," said Suban.

The neighbour to the right [of] Mungaroo, Mr Gavin Foxcroft, s[aid] it was an issue of privacy.

"The rest of us don't wan[t a] religious building of that size [and] magnitude in the road," he said.

On the opposite side, Mrs Ron[a] Zabora Bird has also voiced [her] disapproval.

"It looks right into my moth[er's] dressing room and my paren[ts'] room, totally taking away th[eir] privacy," she said.

"This is not religious prejud[ice]. The size is worrying and then th[ere] is the privacy point," she added.

Mungaroo said: "I just don't [un]derstand it. I have grown up beli[ev]ing your neighbours are your imm[e]diate family. This is my consti[tu]tional right yet my life has be[en] made so miserable."

SEE EDITORIAL, PAG[E]

THE INDEPENDENT ON SATURDAY, APRIL 28th 2001

He shouldn't impose his religion on us

From GAVIN FOXCROFT
Glenashley

THIS is in response to your editorial "Dogmatic Attitude – Violates Freedom". I feel so strongly about the situation in Gemmell Place, Glenashley, that I requested *The Independent on Saturday* to do a story and was very disturbed at the way in which it was done.

Firstly, let me assure you that there is absolutely no racial aspect to this issue but one of principle and accepted values in residential areas. To support my statement, I was instrumental in the starting up of a branch of the IFP in Durban North. I marched through the streets of Durban with thousands of IFP supporters and I have attended marches at Ulundi and Curries Fountain. Also, one of my daughters attended the University of Durban-Westville by choice (and completed her degree there despite being chased and threatened with death by rioters during an uprising started by none other than your very own Ashwin Desai – for whom I have the greatest regard). Racist? No way.

Let me get to the heart of the matter.

Thankfully, one of our astute newspaper readers noticed the piece in the paper almost two months ago about the proposed building of a temple. (That is what it is – not a prayer room, as reported.)

On asking the building inspector responsible for the building whether we, as residents, were not entitled to be informed and allowed to object, I was told by him that it was not necessary at all as it was just a small obscure little prayer room.

The neighbour from number 11 and I arranged to meet with an official from the City Engineers' Department to have a look at the actual plans and after exchanging greetings we were told that Mr (Ishwar) Mangaroo was "very, well connected" in the Council and would more than likely get his plans passed regardless of any objections.

Building was started without authority and on requesting the Building Inspector to act according to the law, it took several days to have a Stop Work order issued. This was simply ignored, and when my wife told the builder that he was building illegally, Mangaroo, who was present, said that he would not be dictated to by anyone and he would do whatever he wanted to on his property.

As you correctly stated in your article, "A Matter of Privacy", 27 objections have been lodged and totally ignored by the Town Planning Department, which makes a mockery of democracy. This has been done to give in to the wishes of one new resident who has shown absolute disregard for his neighbours, particularly the residents of number 11 as his approved plans have completely shattered their privacy, which by the way is a legal right in terms of the Constitution you have been so quick to quote in the editorial.

Every resident, but one, of Gemmell Place has objected in the strongest terms to the building of such a temple in our midst and we have been ignored. As Mangaroo so aptly states, it is his right but assumes that it is also his right to completely disregard his neighbours' wishes, and all in the name of religion.

Further to the question of his right, the law states he has to ask permission and it is not an automatic right. The permission has now been granted to the detriment of all the residents.

You take for granted that we are mostly white and Christian – I assume you visited every resident and asked them. That apart, we, to a man, have no objection if Martians came to live next door but then they can do as we do – get in our cars or walk or ride to our place of worship.

I have it on good authority that there are several private prayer rooms in the Durban North area and they are of such a size and nature that they are not an annoyance to anybody. Mangaroo's proposed temple is a room of 17m², around 4m by 4m which stands on top of a 120m² concrete slab. The doors of the so-called prayer room open onto the slab which is surrounded by a hand rail with stairs to access the slab without having to go through the house.

Now I don't think one has to be a rocket scientist to realise what the place is going to be used for and by how many people. By his own admission he will have the "occasional" festival at his house. We live in a very small cul-de-sac with only 19 properties, there is only one entrance/exit with a small island in the centre. By the size and magnitude of the building, I feel that residents have a right to object to the building of a temple. Privacy is of the utmost concern to us all and must be held sacred and not taken away for the sake of one man's religious right.

6. We live in a small community, we all look out for each other, and have always helped each other. We have community braais in the street and a Neighbourhood Watch, we are good people and good neighbours, regardless of colour, race or creed. Why should we change the ethos of this community just to give one man his right to impose his religion over us?

THE INDEPENDENT
on Saturday
APRIL 14th 2001, pg5

Dogmatic attitude violates freedom

EASTER, the most holy day in the Christian calendar, symbolises the selflessness with which Christians believe Jesus Christ died on the cross to save their souls. The day is, in many ways, the most symbolic and the most meaningful in forwarding the doctrine of tolerance, which Christ himself personified.

We therefore find it most disturbing to hear that 27 residents of Glenashley – most of them both white and Christian – have objected to the building of a private prayer room by their neighbour, Mr Ishwar Mungaroo, and his family.

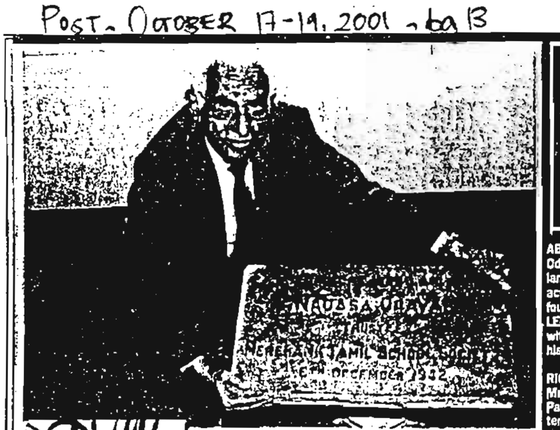
These 27 residents, we are told, have made these objections on the basis of increased traffic volumes, dropping property values and invasion of privacy stemming from the presence of a prayer room on Mungaroo's property. They have gone to great lengths to justify their objections, arguing that they are based on these reasons and not on the basis of racial or religious prejudice.

The reality is that the prayer room is not a public facility or even a Temple belonging to any particular group – it is a private prayer room being built by Mungaroo for his family to exercise their Constitutional right to freedom of religion.

Mungaroo's understanding differs. He believes their actions are motivated by rejection of his skin colour and his religion, as he is neither white nor Christian, but rather Indian and Hindu. He also believes – in our view quite rightly – that his Constitutional right to freedom of religion is being eroded by his neighbours.

We call on his neighbours to embrace the doctrines espoused by Christ and behave in a truly Christian manner, rather than adopting a dogmatic approach, which amounts to an insult to the beliefs for which Christ both lived and died.

POST - OCTOBER 17-19, 2001 - pg 13



ABOVE: Pioneer Mr ST Nadasen Odayar whose love for the Tamil language and his business acumen has laid a solid foundation for three generations.
LEFT: Mr Athie Nadasen Odayar with the foundation stone bearing his late father's name
Picture: CHIPPY DEVJEE
RIGHT: A deeply religious man, Mr Odayar and his wife Parvathee praying at a local temple

Roots
taking you back in time

NOT even the notorious Group Areas Act of the apartheid government could bury the legacy of Durban business and cultural pioneer Mr Sanyassi Thiruvengdam Nadasen Odayar. A foundation stone at a Tamil school in Merebank, bearing his name, was buried in rubble when the school was expropriated to make way for the city's southern freeway. The bulldozers dumped the historic stone in a landfill site. In a strange twist of fate, the stone was discovered and handed to his family. Today, the foundation stone is part of the history of Indians in South Africa at the Durban Cultural and Documentation Centre. Reports MARLAN PADAYACHEE

THIS is an amazing story of heroism, resilience and the spirit of survival against all odds. It is about how a 12-year-old boy left India with his uncle in 1902, believing that they were headed for the French colony of Pondicherry.

But the harsh reality struck him when he was splashed in the face by the driving waters of the Indian Ocean.

He didn't even have sufficient time to tell his parents about after arriving in Durban and while working as an assistant priest to his uncle, Mr Soobiah Odayar, this intrepid teenager almost drowned during the killer floods that engulfed the Sri Ambalavanar Alayam (also known as the Umbilo Road temple) in the Rossburgh radius.

Today, almost 97 years later, the legacy of the unlikely hero, Mr Sanyassi Thiruvengdam Nadasen Odayar, lives on in the form of the majestic Merebank Tamil School Society (MTSS) diaspora straddled the business and cultural sectors with distinction, empathy and compassion. It is his life-long gratitude to his community after he was rescued from the roof of the temple in raging flood waters.

"My father cried when he recalled the incident at a Merebank gathering in the 1940s, attended by Mr PR Pather and Mr Albert Christopher," said his eldest son, Mr Athie Nadesan Odayar, 79.

"Tragically, his uncle drowned but details of this incident were published in a newspaper, with photographs, and have been restored at the Documentation Centre.

"We were once travelling from a temple meeting and he told me his about his trials and tribulations, and his undying love for the Tamil language and culture."

He said his father's association with Tamil intellectuals – among them Mr ML Sultan (he later converted to Islam) who spoke Tamil fluently, Mr Poovalingam Pillay and Mr Ponnusamy Padayachee – Yet he could not speak English fluently. In India, he spent six years learning Tamil in a village school. He left behind a legacy that is almost unmatched in the history of the indentured labourers – a Tamil school that has developed into a full-blown institution.

MTSS recently paid homage to its founding father when it opened a new block of Tamil classrooms and a boardroom, additions to its large auditorium and dining hall.

Clan

His son Mr Athie Nadasen, grandson Mr Morgan Nadasen and other members of this renowned clan all serve on the board of the organisation.

Indian historian, writer and former headmaster Mr Candasaml Kuppusami recalled: "(Mr) Nadasen readily agreed to join his uncle. He left home without informing his parents. It was only when he was on the high seas that he realised the error of his ways.

"In 1902, he and his uncle, along with many others, temple and travelled to Pietermaritzburg. He later settled in Merebank, where he started a laundry.

In 1917, Mr Nadasen Odayar married Amakanoo Govender, daughter of Miss Parvathee Ammal and Mr Subraya Govender, who owned a laundry business.

His marriage inspired him to get involved in language and culture, without losing sight of his burgeoning business interests in a community of working-class people. He established a wood and coal business and transported goods on a two mule-drawn spring carts in Beach Road.

He also established his own general dealer store, that became one of the business hallmarks of this family.

The Odayar dynasty soon spread to six sons and three daughters. Today, the clan numbers 40 grandchildren, 75 great grandchildren and 16 great great grandchildren.

Having established a string of successful businesses, including a trucking business, Mr the Merebank Government-aided School. Weddings were held in this hall in Lake Road. Tamil films, featuring the giants of the Indian screen, MG Ramachandra and Sivaji Ganesen, were also screened at weekends.

In the 1960s, the property was expropriated to make way for a new freeway linking the city to the southern suburbs.

The Department of Community Development paid a compensation of R11 000 to rebuild the school on a nearby site.

In 1942, the new school was opened by then Durban mayor, Mr Rupert Ellis Brown.

Mr Nadasen Odayar played a key role in the founding of this institute, together with another pioneer resident and businessman, Mr Moonsamy Ramsamy "MR" Moodley.

In the 1920s, Mr Nadasen Odayar retraced his roots to his birthplace in Mayavaram, where he was reunited with family members and relatives.

Years later he brought his niece, Mrs Saroja Chandra- Nadasen, also retraced his roots and established strong links.

Then his grandson, Mr Morgan Nadesen, undertook a nostalgic journey with his wife, Malini, and their three children in 1999. The new generation plan to establish a family tree and publish a book chronicling their history from 1902 to 2002.

"Not even the Group Areas Act could bury my grandfather's history," said Mr Morgan Nadasen.

"The history of MTSS was rescued when Mr Arthur Govender alerted my father about the discovery of the foundation stone that was bulldozed in 1961.

"We donated the stone to the documentation centre as part of the history of the 1860 people."

Post, October 10-12, 2001, pg 9

this week in politics

MARLAN PADAYACHEE

Why we should be counting on a good census

THIS week South Africa began counting its people in Census 2001, a two-week exercise aimed at documenting its national demographics.

The slogan for the big head-count – at a cost of R643 million to the taxpayer – is "Count us in."

Almost 26 million questionnaires, containing 240 million pages, will be delivered to households from October 10 to October 31.

Through the capturing of data, the government hopes to devise its policies, or improve existing policies, to meet the needs of communities – for example, a lack of basic essential services.

In a post-apartheid environment of entrenched racism, social prejudice and security fears, Statistics South Africa has appealed to citizens across the racial spectrum to exercise tolerance, caution and courtesy in dealing with almost 100 000 enumerators who will be knocking on doors until October 31.

Miss India South Africa Surisha Naidoo ... gives Census 2001 the green light

Picture: DEENA PILLAY

The government has also assured families of their confidentiality in filling information in the 12-page census form.

Statistician-general Mr Pali Lehohla warned that enumerators could be fined R10 000 and/or imprisoned for a period not exceeding six months, if found guilty of wilfully disclosing any information in the form.

Enumerators have also taken an oath of confidentiality.

People will be expected to answer a variety of questions, including name, date of birth, marital status, population group, language, religion, place of birth, citizenship, disabilities, school attendance, level of education, employment, income and type of house.

Details must be filled in pencil only and census officials, clearly identified by their yellow bibs, are expected to spend between 15 and 45 minutes helping families fill in the forms.

According to the census count, every person, young and old in South Africa, should be counted in the household where they were up to midnight last night (Tuesday) and tonight (Wednesday).

"Welcome them, save them from vicious dogs and those living behind high walls, open your gates, be patient and give them your co-operation. The census is a national asset.

"It cannot succeed without reliable data, and therefore we call on you to participate fully in this national endeavour," said Statistics South Africa.

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AT THE Tamil festival hosted by the Merebank Tamil School Society (MTSS), about 6 000 devotees and visitors were [illegible] fill their home language in the section under "other" – for example, Tamil.

The other Indian sub-groups could also enter Telugu, Gujarati, Urdu and Hindi in [illegible] the government to cater for other languages over and above the 11 official languages.

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FOLLOWING a hectic week of speaking engagements, the City of Durban mayoral team and the eThekwini multi-party executive committee will be locked in exco meetings to thrash out several outstanding issues.

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AT the weekend, Deputy Mayor Mr Logie Naidoo addressed the MTSS Tamil festival, participated in the opening of a new Tamil school and unveiled the Thiru Valluvar statue, a tribute to Indian poet and philosopher, at the Merebank Tamil School Society. Mr Naidoo said the weekend was a "spiritual one". He also attended a Muslim event in Havenside, Chatsworth.

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ON Monday, the Speaker, Ms Nomusa Qhamkile Dube, was honoured by Muslim women at a private luncheon at the Durban Country Club.

"Ms Dube is an outstanding role model for women of all races and we believe that she has to be recognised and honoured so that she may continue serving the city and also focus on women's issues and gender politics as well," said Mrs Safia Moosa.

□□□

SOON after addressing disgruntled residents at hazardous landfill dumps in Clare Estate, KwaZulu Natal Minister of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, Mr Narend Singh, packed his bags and headed a six-member delegation to Belgium and Denmark for discussions with potential investors in agricultural projects in the province.

Mr Singh is patron of the KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Development Trust, a public and private sector partnership aimed at producing a conduit for project investment and international donor funding.

The minister was accompanied by trust chairman, Mr Harry Strauss, head of the KwaZulu Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs), vice-chairman Dr Patrick Sokhela and trustees Mr Cornel Moll (Billiton), Mr Sbu Ngubane (Land Bank KwaZulu Natal) and Mr Walter Ntuli, president of the KwaZulu Natal Agricultural Union.

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KWAZULU Natal Minister of Finance Mr Peter Miller will address the annual meeting of the Durban Children's Society, Greyville, on Thursday, October 18.

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FINANCE Minister Mr Trevor Manuel, who is due in Durban early next month at a private business briefing, will be awarded a Doctor of Commerce degree at the University of Stellenbosch in December.

SUNDAY TIMES KZN, NOVEMBER 11th, 2001

Devi ON SUNDAY

"THE way these children are pestering me to buy crackers for them," Sam was complaining at the start of the day. "I bought a big box of sparklers last week, and just last night my laalties tell me it's finished, I must buy more. Sometimes I wonder whether they eating it or selling it."

"Knowing your laalties, they must be selling the fireworks," Jay commented drily from the photocopying machine, remembering the occasion when Sam's sons sold the family dog for R100 to a passerby.

The whole office followed the saga closely as Sam ran around his neighbourhood sticking up posters and taking out ads in the local paper in the hope that the dog would be returned. The animal was never seen again.

"You could be right," Sam conceded thoughtfully, "with those two thunsils (scamps), you just never know."

"But why you only buying sparklers for them?" Ravi asked from across the office. "Your laalties are big hey? Surely they would want to play with a few big bangs?"

"Don't even go there," Sam sighed. "I have that same argument with them every day."

"Then, what's the problem? My two at home are busting it up with the fireworks. If I gave them sparklers they'll laugh at me. And they're girls," said Jay.

"I'm worried about the neighbours. I don't want to make them mal or something," Sam explained.

"You're a very considerate ou. Sihce when charous ever worried about the neighbours?" Ravi asked, laughing.

"Yes, but you forget that I'm staying in Morningside," Sam reminded his colleagues. "You can't just go and do what you want there."

Ravi and Jay looked at each other.

"Oh, ya, I forgot. You got white neighbours," shame," said Jay.

"Ya, I don't want the laalties to make a big bust-up with the big bangs and then the neighbours start to complain," Sam was saying.

Ravi was shaking his head.

"Why you fellas want to go and buy in the white area, spend so much money and then you can't do what you want in your own yard? Explain that to me. Look at me, I'm staying with the charous in the heart of Phoenix and I can go and do whatever I want to in my own yard and nobody can tell me nothing."

"I know," Sam was saying wistfully. "I remember when I was staying in Chatsworth you could invite a hundred people to your house, your visitors can park on everyone's driveways, you can play loud music till late at night and there'll be no problems. I remember for weeks before Deepavali you could bust it up with the fireworks till late in the night and nobody will complain. It's just different in a white area."

> *"Why you fellas want to go and buy in the white area, spend so much money and then you can't do what you want in your own yard? Explain that to me. Look at me, I'm staying with the charous in the heart of Phoenix and I can go and do whatever I want to in my own yard and nobody can tell me nothing."*

Why?" Ravi wanted to know.

"It just is," said Sam with an air of resignation.

"Then what you going to do for Deepavali? Make the laalties light sparklers?" Ravi asked, laughing again.

"No, I'm packing the whole family up and going to my mother's house in Chatsworth. Let the laalties have a good time there."

Jay was gobsmacked.

"You mean to tell us that after paying so much for a house in Morningside, your first Deepavali in your new house for God's sake, it's bloody ridiculous that you have to go to your ma's house in Chatsworth!"

"Ya, but what else can I do? That's just one of the compromises of living in a white area," Sam explained.

"If I were you, I will give the laalties the big bangs, let them bust it up and then wait and see what the neighbours do," Jay said rebelliously.

"Are you mad?" said Sam incredulously. "You know what will happen? They'll phone the police or something. No, I can't do that. But I did have an idea. Tell you what you'll think. I thought that what I'll do is write my neighbours a letter telling them that my laalties are going to light some fireworks between six and six thirty and they must please lock their dogs away. Then I'm going to invite them to come, you know, make like we are all good neighbours. Never mind, let their children come and see the fireworks too. Then, when the half-hour is up, I'll give them their Deepavali parcels, lock up and go to my ma's."

Jay was at a complete loss for words and Ravi couldn't control his laughter.

"You mal or something?" he asked. "You only going to let the laalties play with the fireworks for half an hour? And if you so frightened for your neighbours, then why you inviting them and plus, you giving them parcels?"

"I told you," Sam explained slowly. "Nice to be good neighbours."

"I have just one question," Jay said, recovering. "In all the years you lived in Chatsworth, did you ever once write such a letter to your neighbour? Just once?"

"No, but that's different, Sam said. "In the Indian areas people are understanding and you don't have to feel frightened about anything."

Jay picked up his stack of photocopies and quickly walked back to his desk, muttering something about the triumph of good over evil.

● Tune in to Straight Talk with Devi Sankaree od Lotus FM weeknights 8-9pm. Devi's e-mail address is govenderd@sundaytimes.co.za