

## **DR. KEAN GIBSON'S PROVOKING POLEMIC ON HINDUISM AND INDIANS IN GUYANA**

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The prosecution of other races and religion with the use of stereotypes and/or pseudo science can serve as an emotional trigger for some and for others; it can be a thought provoking action, whereby the reason and truth behind this prosecution is studied. This paper explores Dr. Kean Gibson's works and her particularly negative opinions on the Hindu/ Indian community in certain countries and by extension, the world.

### **Introduction**

Dr. Kean Gibson, a University of the West Indies (UWI) lecturer in Linguistics (but not a scholar in religion) has published writings, lectured to high school students and given at least one television interview impugning and denigrating the Hindu religion and East Indians of Guyana (and by extension all global Indians) by describing Hindus, whom she defines as all Indians in Guyana (Gibson, 2005, p. 33), as a misguided polity driven by a sacred duty to exterminate Black people in the country. Gibson further argues that Blacks attacking or killing Indians is "sacrificial" because it is a salutary "resistance violence" which would have the desired effect of proactively limiting 'sacred duty' attacks by Indians. Similarly, she argues that "dysfunctional deflective violence" where a "surrogate victim" is chosen – in lieu of, say, a security sheltered Indian leader or politician - because the hapless victim is "vulnerable and close at hand" is also sacrificial (Gibson, 2005, p. 70). These pronouncements have the eerie resonance when one considers, a most stunning carnage where eleven Indians – children and their parents – were massacred in the 'dead of night' at Lusignan, Guyana, 2008. Coincidentally, Dr Gibson was in Guyana on sabbatical at the time of the massacre.

The publications in question are: *The Cycle of Racial Oppression [The Cycle]* (2003); *Sacred Duty - Hinduism & Violence in Guyana [Sacred Duty]* (2005); and *The Dualism of Good and Evil and East Indian Insecurity in Guyana, Journal of Black Studies* (Jan 2006, Sage Publications).

Dr. Gibson credits The University of the West Indies [UWI] for providing the research grants for *The Cycle* and *Sacred Duty*. Because Gibson's misinformed views and questionable scholarship have the potential to negatively impact the lives of people of Indian ancestry in Guyana and the Caribbean her writings ought to be subjected to the rigours of unbiased academic scrutiny.

### **Critical Evaluation of Gibson's Writings**

In order to draw this Conference attention to Dr. Gibson's malformed thesis and invidious views and make the case for unbiased academic scrutiny a sample of her writings will be examined under two main categories.

- Weak research – Distortions of Hindu scriptures; misstated historical, political and social dynamics of Indians vis a vis Blacks.
- Flawed analyses – skewed statistics; no definition of core issue; illogical conclusion.

The topics in each category address the sample of Gibson's assertions and arguments which will be subjected to a critical analysis and/or a rebuttal of her formulations. In this way, specific pieces of her thesis will be put under the microscope to test them for validity and scholarly attributes. In the interest of space only a few will be dealt with.

#### **Weak Research**

This section will focus on Hindu theology which has been misconstrued to fit Gibson's simplistic paradigm of the "dualism of good over evil." Indian contribution to the political life of Guyana will also be dealt with.

#### **Dharma**

Dharma is the most seminal concept in Hinduism which Dr. Gibson uses, along with casteism – dealt with below – to launch her broadside on Hinduism. In the section entitled "Violence in Hinduism", Gibson writes: "Right and wrong are not absolute in this [dharma] system, but are decided according to social rank, kinship and stage of life. This relativity of values means that there is no concept of egalitarianism..... in Hinduism the ultimate concern is moral order or inequality and the content of that concern would be violence to one's neighbor (sic) since inequality implies creation of enemies and therefore a relationship of violence" (Gibson, 2005, p. 24).

Critique: This elusive, subtle and multi-faceted concept which underlies all of Hinduism (Sanatana Dharma or Eternal, Universal Law) is best introduced, for the sake of objectivity, by reference to non-Hindu academics.

R. C. Zaehner (1966) defines dharma as both natural law and religious law where the latter is an expression of the more fundamental former. It is derived from the Sanskrit root "dhr-" meaning 'to hold, have or maintain' – the same root from which are derived the Latin firmus, 'firm', and forma, 'form'. Dharma then is [the] form of things as they are and the power that keeps them as they are...And just as it maintains the whole universe in being in accordance with eternal law (sanatana dharma), so in the moral sphere,..." (p. 2).

An elaboration on Ashrama Dharma, Svadharma and Sadharana Dharma as they relate to a Hindu's social and moral sphere can be found in the Endnotes<sup>1</sup> Zaehner (1966) amplifies that like its forerunner, the Vedic *rta* - law, cosmic order, truth, righteousness, reality - *Dharma* "is equally difficult to define in any precise terms. It is the law that governs the universe, the law that operates in ritual and sacrifice and finally the moral law that with equal impartiality regulates the conduct of men" (p. 30).

As well, *rta* is the etymological antecedent of 'right' or correct. Theoretical Physicist, Prof. Dean Brown reiterates this salient attribute when extolling the Sanskrit language and the Vedic-Hindu scriptures such as the Upanishads, which he said he translated. [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4ush\\_thinking-allowed-sanskrit-tradition](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4ush_thinking-allowed-sanskrit-tradition)

According to John Bowker (1997) we see *rta* defined as and linked to *dharma* as follows: *Rta*, or *Rta(m)*, (Sanskrit, "fixed order, rule") in Hinduism is the sense of fundamental order and balance that exists in the universe and must be observed and sustained through appropriate sacrifices, rituals, and behaviors. The word *rta* is related to *rtu*, the seasons, which recur regularly outside of the control of man... *Rta* is deeper and more fundamental than the gods, and anticipates the impersonal law of *karma* and the pervasive rule of *dharma*. <http://www.themystica.com/mystical/articles/r/rta.html> (pp. 825-826).

Thus, it has been established that the word "*ritual*" is etymologically tied to "*rta*" as being the specified way (the rule, the 'right' way) to perform certain actions. This association has further been made by Michael Woods (2009), narrator of the U.S.A. PBS, six-hour TV series: "The Story of India", by referring to Hindu religious rituals as patterning and supporting the "ritual universe" where every thing is in "precise place and order". Woods went on to define "*dharma*" as "*virtue*."

Furthermore, Prof. Nicholas Sutton (2001) informs the reader that Hindu religious truth is acknowledged as complex: "*dharma* is subtle and hard to define" (p. 7). These assertions by expert-in-the-field academics counterpose what Gibson (2005) posits that *dharma* leads to inequality and hence violence. With such impressive testimonial, the censorious assessment of *dharma* by Kean Gibson is obviously an uneducated opinion.

### **Hinduism "Ten Commandments"**

Furthermore, on a related issue, these universal, unwavering and non-relative duties "obligatory" for all Hindus are the very "ten commandments" (p. 116) according to Zaehner that Gibson claims are non-existent in Hinduism, contrasted to Christianity: "There are no Ten Commandments as in Christianity which may control our primordial instincts and provide a set of principles for living well with others (2003, pp. 28-29)" and "Right and wrong are not absolute in this system" (2005, p. 24). Reference to the following internet article will show indisputably, concurring

with Prof. Zaehner, that the ten *yamas and niyamas* are considered Hinduism/Yoga “Ten Commandments”. [http://www.atmajyoti.org/med\\_foundations\\_of\\_yoga.asp](http://www.atmajyoti.org/med_foundations_of_yoga.asp)

In summary, the preceding exposition on Hindu *dharma* in the opinion of leading non-Hindu scholars is significantly at odds with Kean Gibson’s deprecatory view of Hinduism’s fundamental concept. Clearly, except for privileges or restrictions prescribed or proscribed respectively for the four life stages, which all will enjoy or be denied in time, and the privileges that are assigned to the four functional-social classes because they are consistent with their prescribed duties, all individuals are expected to adhere to the principles of good conduct listed under *sadharana dharma*. So, ‘right and wrong’ are ‘absolute’ in Hinduism with reasonable exceptions.

### Casteism

Gibson writes: “In the Hindu scriptures, the caste system is called ‘Chatur Varna’ meaning four ‘colours’ - it is colour-coded like Western racism”. Thus, the “priestly class...are white; the Kshatriyas – royal and fighter class to rule and defend society – are red; the Vaishyas – business class... are yellow; the Shudras – to help all other classes in their respective duties – are black....The colour association with each caste was introduced to identify the moral value associated with each caste and thus used to determine the character of a person. In the system ‘white’ is pure and ‘black’ is least pure. In South India, however, black was considered good thus Lord Krishna is seen in blue and black”. As well: “...all non-Hindus who are objectively black in colour (are) outside the pale of humanity” (2003, p. 26).

Critique: The translation of “chatur varna” as “four colours” is a popular convention but a misconception. “Colour” is used mainly by those commentators who emphasize or confuse the symbols for the facts - the denotation for the connotation.

While *varna* has “colour” as one of the meanings, it is only a gross translation of the concept. Behind the obvious, “colour”, what is implied by *varna* is a “classification” of types of aptitudes and qualities (the predominant *gunas* - see later) which people acquire, to which the colour symbolism was assigned. It certainly is not an indicator of “moral value” or “character.”

According to one of several respected sources, the Sanskrit word, “*Varna*”, is derived from the root “vr” meaning to choose, select, or classify. Refer: <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/varna> which states: Sanskrit वर्ण (*várna*), “‘colour, tint, dye, pigment, appearance, aspect’”), from verbal root √v[ (“to choose, select”).

To clarify the linkage: when we notice that one colour is different from another we are actually using our discriminative faculty to classify, separate and select one from the other. The colours become the gross products from the exercise; but it is the exercise that provides the meaning to the results – the colours. So, in order to appreciate the “*varna*” concept, one needs to go beyond the consequential ‘product’

(the noun – the colour) of the mental exercise to the activity (the verbal “root” – to classify).

Since “choice” is at the root of “varna”, it means that the “varna” system was intended, originally, such that the individual would have a say in his/her social classification based on conduct (including karma), aptitude or training (not on birth). Furthermore, colour coding is universally used to convey symbolic and figurative ideas, and is not a unique Hindu practice. For example, the colour association in nations’ flags and banners carry significant practical, motivational and sublime imagery to the respective nations.

Dr. Gibson’s superficial knowledge and inadequate research become arrantly conspicuous when one considers the full *sloka* (verse) wherefrom the concept of ‘*chatur varna*’ is lifted. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1973) – former Spalding Professor at Oxford University and former President of India - provides elucidation in his translation of the Bhagavad Gita, as follows. *Sloka IV.13* states: “*caturvarnyam maya srstam gunakarmavibhagasah*”, “The fourfold order was created by Me [Lord Krishna speaking as the Supreme Godhead] according to the *gunas* - divisions of quality and work”. Dr Radhakrishnan explains that “the emphasis is on *guna* (aptitude) and *karma* (work, function) and not *jati* (birth). The *varna* or social order to which we belong is independent of sex, birth or breeding...In the Mahabharata, the ethical protagonist, Yudhisthira, says that it is difficult to find out the caste[*varna*] of persons on account of the mixture of castes[*varnas*]...So, conduct is the only determining feature of caste[*varnas*]... according to the sages.” (p. 160).

This seminal Hindu prescription is for an human-ecological, complementary and reciprocal relationship among members of society. In other words, the prescribed Hindu view of human society, in the parlance of the ‘game theory’ discipline, is “win-win” and not a “zero-sum game.” Aside from the confusion of colour for *varna*, the word “caste” is an import into India; it is derived from the Portuguese word (*casta*) meaning race, breed or lineage. “It is derived from the older Latin word *castus*, “chaste,” implying that the lineage has been kept pure”. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casta>. The Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama arrived in India in 1498; and until 1961, Portugal held settlements there. So, “caste” is clearly not an indigenous word to India. Besides, it indicates a ‘caste system’ based on birth already existed elsewhere. Gibson is mute on this fact.

### **Battlefield Site of Bhagavad Gita Sermon**

Gibson (2005) argues that because the site for the Bhagavad Gita (Gita) sermon was on a battlefield: “The site for the sermon indicated that violence is sacred. Violence, therefore, is the heart and soul of Hinduism” (p. 24).

Critique: At the theological level, the occasion and site of the *Gita* sermon – a fratricidal war scene - was well chosen (where familial concerns, basal fears and

raw emotions abounded) to deliver a most profound and sublime message, that we live in this world and we have to do things that are sometimes very disagreeable to our senses and perceptions, even engaging in a war, but are nevertheless necessary on occasion to further humanity such as, in our contemporary era, taking part in World War II to stop the Nazi evil.

Furthermore, when Lord Krishna was cursed by Gandhari, mother of Duryodhana, a leading protagonist for not stopping the war and nearly, for a second time, by the desert sage, Uttanka, his answer was that his mission as a (human) avatar – an aspect of the Supreme Brahman - *was to save humanity, not to stop the war*. He explained to Uttanka, that he has to *act according to the incarnation he assumes*, from time to time, as conditions require. In the context of the Mahabharata war, he did his human duty as a friend to and negotiator for both sides to let clear heads prevail. <http://www.boloji.net/hinduism/150.htm> Similarly, Jesus Christ, whom Gibson (2005, p. 34) cites as a model, could say: “The Father and I are One” <http://bible.cc/john/10-30.htm>, yet, he didn’t use his divine powers to cure or save every needy person during his mission.

Krishna’s deeper message: Not even the Supreme Lord – whether as the impersonal Godhead or as an incarnation - interferes with the laws of the universe, such as, *Rta/Dharma, Karma and Reincarnation*. Gibson didn’t do her homework.

*‘Every endeavor is clouded by some fault’*

Gibson (2005) misinterprets the *Bhagavad Gita* (18:48) where Lord Krishna is telling his disciple, Arjuna: “Every endeavor is covered [clouded] by some fault, just as fire is covered [clouded] by smoke”. Gibson reads it as: “So a *kshatriya* has to fight his enemies” or a “*Vaisya*... may sometimes have to do business on the blackmarket”. Thus, she concludes: “...not only are the violence of greed, dishonesty and exploitation sacred and therefore virtuous, but all are necessary for maintenance of the moral order” (p. 27).

Critique: For the sake of context, the two preceding verses state: (Gita 18:45) “*Devoted each to his duty, man attains perfection*” and (Gita 18:47) “*Better is one’s own duty, though imperfectly carried out, than the duty of another carried out perfectly...*” (Radhakrishnan, 1973, v.18:45-7). What is implied is that when we adopt attitudes alien to our inmost nature we negate the ‘divine self-expression’ with which we are all imbued no matter which *varna* we are associated with. As well, all the *varnas* (castes) duties entail some defect. An illustration will suffice.

Consider the following scenario as reflective of what Lord Krishna meant. If a saintly Brahmin is meditating in the woods and a deer rushes by followed by a hunter; and the hunter asks the Brahmin whether he saw the deer and where it went. What would be the appropriate answer? If the Brahmin tells the truth, he will incur a ‘sin’, since it could lead to a frightening chase and possibly the killing of the deer. If he says he doesn’t know, he will incur the ‘sin’ of lying. If he remains unresponsive, he will incur the ‘sin’ of ambiguity and of not offering up the truth.

So, even for the saintly Brahmin, his “*duty*” is associated with a defect, as “*fire is clouded with smoke*”. There is nothing sacred or virtuous, per se, in any of the three actions. Each individual must strive to perform his/her assigned duties to the maximum, selflessly, in order to activate his/her “divine self-expression.”

### **Misrepresenting Indo-Guyanese and their Contribution to Guyana's History**

“[T]he pervasive culture [in Guyana is] that if you are not East Indian you are nobody”; and, “Hindu racism... is an open problem in countries where East Indians were taken by the British” (Gibson, 2003, p. 1-2).

Critique: Besides the divisive smear on East Indians and Hindus, Gibson is effectively saying that they are chauvinistic and unassimilative. She has falsified East Indians' contributions to Guyanese identity and politics as eminent authorities make clear. Prof. Emeritus and Chair of Dept of Anthropology, U-Chicago, Raymond Smith has written that Indians in Guyana partake in the Guyanese political arena rather than seek ‘tribal’ comfort: the “Indian population has been gradually becoming more and more involved in the social life of the whole country and adopting a Guianese rather than a specifically Indian way of life”. [http://home.uchicago.edu/~rts1/chapter\\_v.htm](http://home.uchicago.edu/~rts1/chapter_v.htm)

Furthermore, Prof. Smith has argued that in reaction to being looked down upon by Creole society, including Africans, “the Indian's emphasis upon the value and worth-whileness of ‘our Indian culture’ is really a mode of expression of his desire to be treated on terms of equality within a Guianese universe. It is most emphatically not an expression of separatist tendencies.”

On the matter of ‘caste system’ in the Guyanese milieu, historian and Presbyterian Minister, Reverend Dr. Dale Bisnauth (2001) notes that the caste system is not the central factor in the Hindu way of life rather it is seen to be anachronistic (pp. 356-57). This revelation strikes down Gibson's claim that Hindus' relations with others, especially the Black population, is underpinned by scripture-driven caste system.

Eusi Kwayana, by all accounts Guyana's foremost African elder and cultural proponent, in “Cycling to a Better Place” reprinted “The Morning After” (2005) questions Gibson's thesis as to the extent that *Hinduism* informs the leadership of the PPP Government while the extent that *Christianity* informs the leadership of the PNC (opposition) is not questioned. Furthermore, he probes the broader question: “Is African or Amerindian society without caste? I suggest that caste is deep-seated in our psyche”. He cites: “Paule Marshall, the gifted novelist, exclaims through one of her woman characters, ‘Class is our curse!’ Not in every household now or ever in Guyana will some persons be allowed to drink water from the same vessel as the caste of the household” (p. 123). Furthermore, Kwayana (2005) observes: “Those African communities which had kept more cultural resources than others were seen even by Africans as lower class people. Cohesion or clannishness was natural to later [African] arrivals on the coast” (p. 76).



Echoing Kwayana's 'caste of class and tribalism' Beverley Manley, wife of the late Michael Manley of Jamaica, in discussing her autobiography, *The Manley Memoirs*, was reported to have said about "the business of governance" in Jamaica. "There is a side of it that is really not pretty. It's so difficult to be inclusive in the politics in Jamaica because it's so tribal". <http://www.thestar.com/article/504000>.

Kwayana also recognized in *Genesis of a Nation* (1988, pp. 36-37) that the first national, "multiracial political movement" was headed by an Indo-Guyanese, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, while again noting the inverse intolerance: "The Afro-Guyanese who rallied to this banner had to struggle internally in their communities with the old wisdom that warned of the futility of making common cause with Indo-Guyanese."

At a professional level, according to accepted academic standards, Gibson's works on Hinduism and racism in an ethnically diverse society focusing exclusively on the Guyanese society, with no comparative evidence from parallel immigrant societies such as Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad & Tobago and Suriname, as well as, from societies without these characteristics (as 'control' societies for the study) is deficient.

Finally, it must be underscored that in each of the cited multiracial nations, along with Guyana, one or more Indian Prime Ministers or Presidents have been popularly elected to office. The foregoing instances clearly challenge Gibson's misrepresentation of Indians.

### **Claim: Lower Castes Reclassified Themselves for 'Killing'**

Gibson (2005) claims, "While the lower castes were embraced by the Brahmins, among themselves they reclassified as Brahmins and Kshatriyas. This is significant....the occupational duty of Kshatriya caste involve killing as part of their moral obligation" (p. 33).

Critique: The assertion in the first sentence, attributed to Prof. Clem Seecharran (1997) cannot be found on the cited pages of his book. This is an unforgiveable breach of research ethics (pp. 39-41).

Furthermore, this assertion seems to be another artifice by Gibson to impute a nefarious, blood-letting – viz. "killing" motive to Hindus. As well, because Gibson chooses to emphasize only "killing" - which indeed could legally occur under law and order administration - it conveys the message that Gibson is bent on portraying Hindus as unconscionable 'killers' or having a penchant for killing Blacks (African-Guyanese).

Moreover, but ironically, in Guyana the policing and military-type functions and the government administrative occupations are overwhelmingly populated by Africans who consequently are the *de facto* "upper-class" Kshyatrias (according to Gibson's assertions on caste structure in Guyana) which fact contradicts Gibson's thesis of Africans' abject, hopeless and hapless marginalization at the hands of East Indians.



To attest to this occupational peculiarity and power asymmetry, a senior Afro-Guyanese leader, Tacuma Ogunseye, boasted in the Stabroek News, April 30, 2006, after government minister, Sawh's (along with two family members and the security guard's) execution by African insurgents – as hinted by Ogunseye - that because of this racial imbalance in the disciplined forces in favor of African Guyanese, the government cannot militarily defeat the criminals-insurgents.

Ogunseye has unabashedly gone even further. At time of writing, according to the Guyana Chronicle, April 19, 2011 the Ethnic Relations Committee of Guyana is said to be launching an investigation of Ogunseye's most recent "*unambiguous call for racial insurrection in Guyana*" from the African-dominated security forces because he is reported to have said: "...ACDA [African cultural association] expects that the predominantly African-Guyanese dominated security forces would take the side of protesters to secure shared governance..." in Guyana if the Indian-backed PPP party is returned to power in Guyana in up-coming national elections.

### **Flawed Analyses**

In this section Gibson's shortcomings in respect to scholarship are featured - her reliance on skewed statistics; providing no definition of 'violence' which she develops to make her case; and her illogical conclusion regarding an Indian editorialist are illustrated.

### **Statistical Shortcoming**

In order to substantiate her claim of the "dehumanization" of the Negro/Black population in Guyana by East Indians, Gibson asserts in Sacred Duty (2005, p. 11) and again in the Black Journal article (2006, p. 364): "In my view, the decrease in the Negro/Black category and the increase in the Mixed category is (sic) related to the dehumanization of Africans since the East Indian dominated PPP took office in 1992."

According to the Gibson's figures, over six years, Blacks decreased 7.9 percentage points, from 35.6% in 1993 to 27.7% in 1999 of the Guyana population whereas the 'Mixed' category jumped 9.8 points, from 7.9% to 17.7% and, significantly, East Indians remained virtually the same with a decrease of only 1.3 points, from 49.5% to 48.2% over the same period.

Critique: The official census data show that Gibson's statistics and hence claims are false. The UWI lecturer ignored the "unreliability of the measures used in the 1992/93 or 1999 survey" which, the quoted source, Dr. C. Y. Thomas, cited as a possible cause for the inconsistency in ethnic population trends; but she unscholarly and eagerly rushed to accept the "calculated" statistics by Thomas on faith, seemingly because they fit her mantra of "dehumanization of Africans since the East Indian dominated PPP took office in 1992."

Gibson's argument is that it is more 'profitable' for Africans to redefine themselves as "Mixed" rather than "Negro/Black", for the sake of "sanity", under

the 'East Indian' PPP rule (2005, p. 11). But, as shown below, these Thomas' statistics are strikingly at odds with those provided by the official Guyana 2002 Census of Population and Housing, which "was regionally coordinated with the CARICOM Secretariat playing a central role [and with] significant assistance from other International and Local Agencies". [http://www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/pubs/Chapter2\\_Population\\_Composition.pdf](http://www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/pubs/Chapter2_Population_Composition.pdf)

Clearly, another word for the Thomas-Gibson's "calculated" statistics is "guesstimates". The tables presented below summarize the following discussion and will reveal a much different pattern than that promoted by Thomas and Gibson. In the discussion, "*percentage points*" refers to the percent of Guyana population as distributed among the racial or ethnic groups. "*Change - Nominal %*" is the arithmetic difference between the percent of population distributed to the two compared years. Whereas, "*Change - % in Group*" is the percentage change *within* a racial/ethnic group (or intra-group) and is the percentage rise or fall in that racial/ethnic group's population. Gibson doesn't deal with this statistic.

According to the 2002 Guyana Census African/Black declined – nominal % change - by only 2.1 (*not 7.9*) percentage points over the almost twice as long, 11-year, period 1991-2002 from 32.3% (1991) to 30.2% (2002). Mixed increased only 4.6% (*not 9.8%*) from 12.1% to 16.7% but East Indians declined significantly 5.1% (*not 1.3%*) from 48.6% to 43.5% of Guyana's population. As well, over the 22-year period (1980 to 2002), the African/Black declined *only 0.6%*, whereas East Indians declined a stunning 8.4%. In absolute numbers, while the African/Black population declined only 7,032 from 234,094 to 227,062 over the 1980-2002 period East Indians declined, precipitously, 68,140 from 394,417 to 326,277.

Clearly, these official figures 'put the lie' to Gibson's statistics and invidious reasoning: that the Negro/Black population resort to changing their identity so as to safeguard their "*dignity, status in society and well-being*" while the alleged Hindu-based PPP government is in power (2005, p. 11).

#### GIBSON - THOMAS' "CALCULATED" STATISTICS

6-Yr Comparison: 1999 vs 1992/93

	1999 % pop	1992/93 % pop	Change Nominal %
Negro/Black	27.7	35.6	-7.9
Mixed	17.7	7.9	9.8
East Indians	48.2	49.5	-1.3
Amerindian	6.4	6.8	-0.4
Other	0.2	1.0	-0.8

Source: Kean Gibson's Sacred Duty, p. 10

The following Tables reflect Guyana 2002 Census Data

1980 to 1991 : The Latter Years of PNC Rule

	1991 Pop	1991 %	1980 Pop	1980 %	Change Pop	Change Nominal %**	Change % in Group
African/Black	233,465	32.30	234,094	30.80	-629	1.5	-0.3
Mixed	87,881	12.14	84,764	11.16	3,117	1.0	3.7
East Indians	351,939	48.60	394,419	51.90	-42,480	-3.3	-10.8
Amerindians	46,722	6.46	40,343	5.31	6,379	1.2	15.8
All Others *	3,614	0.50	5,946	0.83	-2,332	-0.3	-39.2
Total	723,621	100.0	759,566	100.0	-35,945	-	-4.7

\* All Others comprise, Chinese, Portuguese, White and Others;

\*\* Change- Nominal % is the arithmetic difference between the compared years' %

Source: Guyana Census 2002, p. 28.

1991 vs 2002 (11-yr comparison) under PPP/C \*\*\*

	2002 Pop	2002 %	1991 Pop	1991 %	Change Pop	Change Nominal %**	Change % in Group
African/Black	227,062	30.20	233,465	32.30	-6,403	-2.1	-2.7
Mixed	125,727	16.73	87,881	12.14	37,846	4.6	43.1
East Indians	326,277	43.50	351,939	48.60	-25,662	-5.1	-7.3
Amerindians	68,675	9.16	46,722	6.46	21,953	2.7	47.0
All Others *	3,482	0.41	3,614	0.50	-132	-0.1	-3.7
Total	751,223	100.0	723,621	100.0	27,602	-	3.8

\* All Others comprise, Chinese, Portuguese, White and Others; \*\*\* 1991 was the final year of PNC rule

\*\* Change-Nominal % is the arithmetic diff between the compared years' %

Source: Guyana Census 2002, p. 28.

1980 vs. 2002 (22-yr comparison)

	2002 Pop	2002 %	1980 Pop	1980 %	Change Pop	Change Nominal %**	Change % in group
African/Black	227,062	30.20	234,094	30.80	-7,032	-0.6	-3.0
Mixed	125,727	16.73	84,764	11.16	40,963	5.6	48.3
East Indians	326,277	43.50	394,419	51.90	-68,142	-8.4	-17.3
Amerindians	68,675	9.16	40,343	5.31	28,332	3.9	70.2
All Others *	3,482	0.41	5,946	0.83	-2,464	-0.4	-41.4
Total	751,223	100.0	759,566	100.0	-8,343	-	-1.1

\* All Others comprise, Chinese, Portuguese, White and Others;

\*\* Change-Nominal % is the arithmetic diff between the compared years' %

Source: Guyana Census 2002, p 28.

Religious Affiliation 2002 vs 1991 (Census 2002)

	2002 % pop	2002 Pop calc***.	1991 % Pop	1991 Pop calc***.	Change Pop	Change Nominal %	Change % Intra- Group
Hindu	28.4	213,347	35.0	253,267	-39,920	-6.6	-15.8
Muslim	7.2	54,088	8.0	57,890	-3,802	-0.8	-6.6
Christians							
Pentecostal	16.9	126,957	7.5	54,272	72,685	9.4	133.9
Anglican	6.9	51,834	13.8	99,860	-48,025	-6.9	-48.1
Catholic	8.1	60,849	10.0	72,362	-11,513	-1.9	-15.9
Methodist	1.7	12,771	2.6	18,814	-6,043	-0.9	-32.1
7th Day Adventist	5.0	37,561	4.1	29,668	7,893	0.9	26.6
Other Christians*	18.8	141,230	4.5	32,563	108,667	14.3	333.7
Christian Subtotal	57.4	431,202	42.5	307,539	123,6630	14.9	40.2
Others/Not Stated	2.2	16,527	11.2	81,046	-64,519	-9.0	-79.6
All others**	4.8	36,059	3.3	23,879	12,179	1.5	51.0
Total	100.0	751,223	100.0	723621.0	27,602	-	3.8

\* Other Christians include Baptists, Moravians, Bretheren and Jehovah Witness (1.1% in 2002) among Others”.

\*\* All Others include Bahais, Rastafarians and “None”

\*\*\* Population by Religion is calculated, given the country’s population and the percent distribution from the Census

Source: Guyana Census2002p33.

### The Census message

The question arises, what other reason would cause the population of East Indians to drop sharply when an alleged ‘Hindu and East Indian’ based PPP/C government which supposedly favors them is in power? The answer must look to experience: Indians have continually exited Guyana to avoid the ongoing and escalating suffering under the well established physical harassment at the hands of African Guyanese since the early 1960’s.

### Religious Affiliation: What Does it Tell Us?

The religious affiliation of the Guyanese population over the 1991-2002 period supports the evidence of the 5.1% decline in the East Indian population as reflected in the Census. Hindus declined 6.6% (nominal) from 35% to 28.4% of Guyana’s population. This translates to a 15.8% intra-Hindu decline while the Muslims were only 0.8% (nominal and 6.6% intra-group) for a total of 7.4% decline in the Guyanese traditional East Indian religions.

On the other hand, the census data reveal that all Christians grew 14.9% (nominal) of the population (40.2% intra-group growth) among which, the Pentecostals grew 9.4% (nominal) from 7.5% to 16.9% of the Guyanese population

or 133.9% intra-group in the eleven years. It is not difficult to surmise that the Christian-Pentecostal gain is at the expense of Hindus.

With Hindus falling to only 28.4% (2002) – compared to the Indians 43.5% - of Guyana's population it clearly challenges the Gibsonian view that Hindus wield the imperious power she imputes to them.

This is even more improbable given that the Muslim population has been moving away from their Indian roots to an "Arabization" or "sunnification" identification as Raymond Chickerie has posited in his ground-breaking December 1999 paper. [http://www.guyana.org/features/guyanese\\_muslim.html](http://www.guyana.org/features/guyanese_muslim.html)

### **Dr. Gibson Knowingly uses Skewed Ethnic Statistics**

There is an even more serious failing in Gibson's scholarship - her disingenuous selective use of ethnic statistics. In a footnote in "Sacred Duty", she cites an October 13, 2005 Guyana Stabroek News report on the Guyana 2002 Census: "*Figures for a 2002 population census were released in October 2005*" (Gibson, 2005, p. 11). Since she was aware of the official 2002 Census data, why did she still persist on using the Census-discredited data compiled by Dr. C.Y. Thomas which are clearly skewed in favor of the promotion of the erroneous thesis of African "dehumanization" by the Gibson's so-called Hindu-based PPP/C government and East Indians?

Furthermore, she fails to repeat this note in the later, January 2006, Black Journal article which is a rehash of the said argument of African "dehumanization" at the hands of the alleged 'Hindu dominated' PPP government.

The evidence is overwhelming: Gibson's analysis and conclusions, based on selective and false statistics, reflect tarnished and compromised scholarship in order to advance her ill-founded thesis of East Indian "dehumanization" and "elimination" of African-Guyanese".

### **Gibson foretells "Sacrificial" killing of "surrogate", "vulnerable" Indians**

Gibson (2005) proposes: "*Resistance violence may also be analyzed as sacrificial in that attacking East Indians can be seen as a means of limiting violence and trying to avoid even more violence. East Indians have been killed by Africans. East Indians have also been attacked during protest marches, for according to an African acquaintance: 'They must know how we feel'*" [Emphases added] (p. 69).

And, "*Dysfunctional deflective violence is also sacrificial...if the initial object remains persistently out of reach and continues to provoke hostility... 'violence always finds a surrogate victim...chosen only because it is vulnerable and close at hand'*" [Emphases added] (p. 70).

Critique: These two groups of arguments by Kean Gibson is easily interpreted as a transparent veil of 'academic license'- as justifying and vindicating (some might say, shades of advocating) the attacks on Indians, especially those lacking

security safeguards and are “vulnerable”, as well as, deemed “close at hand” “surrogates” for other Indians who are not as easily reachable.

With the execution of at least a couple of massacres on “vulnerable” East Indians in 2006 and 2008, <http://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2010/05/02/three-committed-to-high-court-for-lusignan-massacre/> following closely on the heels of her 2005 writings on the subject, it is remarkably evident how Kean Gibson’s (2005) pseudo-academic meditations on “sacrificial” violence may have seeded reprisal attacks on Indians. One is left to wonder if she is not using the cocoon of academia forum to thinly theorize that: “Resistance violence may also be analyzed as sacrificial in that attacking East Indians can be seen as a means of limiting violence...” (p. 69).

In hindsight, when one reflects on how “vulnerable” the five hapless Lusignan families were - “surrogate victims...vulnerable and close at hand” (p. 70), next door to Buxton, the acknowledged hub of the Afro-Guyanese perpetrators - the ‘prescience’ of Dr. Gibson’s pronouncements is not so uncanny.

As well, in a curious coincidence, the UWI lecturer was on sabbatical in Guyana, in January 2008, prior to and around the time of the Lusignan atrocity. Here is an excerpt from the “Barbadian Underground” internet blog site on the January 31, 2008: <http://bajan.wordpress.com/2008/01/31/indian-racism-against-afro-guyanese-in-guyana/>

Topic: “Indian Racism Against Afro Guyanese In Guyana”.  
 “This was copied from *The Caribbean Impact* – Jan 2008”  
 Racism and the degeneration of Guyana - Part I

By Dr. Kean Gibson

I am on a one-year sabbatical from my job at The University of the West Indies, Barbados so most of my time is spent in Guyana which is my research area.” Later in the article Dr. Gibson writes: “But Africans are victims of what is in the hearts of East Indians, and as I have pointed out in *The Cycle of Racial Oppression* (2003) and *Sacred Duty: Hinduism and violence in Guyana* (2005), what is written in the Hindu sacred texts. The violent reactions by some East Indians to Cycle (there has been silence on Sacred Duty since I really got to the core of the issue in that book), is that I had the audacity to discuss the formal system of racism that informs their hearts. The racism, and thus inequality, that is promoted in the Hindu sacred texts is a valuable resource which bestows benefits, rights and duties to a group of people and thus must be maintained at all costs and by any means necessary.

No workable definition of “violence” is provided

Gibson (2005): “*In this work I categorize the various types of violence in society*” (p. 8); and “*Violence has been defined as a human condition and the capability for it is present in all of us...*” (p. 36).

Critique: As the example above tells (or, doesn’t), other than the nonspecific and non-helpful definition of violence as “a human condition” there is no workable

definition of the concept. In a supposedly scholarly work, the parameters of such a central notion ought to have been set out, especially one as sensitive a topic as the alleged '*Hindu ideology of violence and genocide*', so that the reader could be availed the opportunity to evaluate the author's premises, analyses, conclusions and pronouncements. (Note: *Sacred Duty* is subtitled *Hinduism and Violence in Guyana*).

This is not simply 'academic' nit-picking. The lack of a delimited definition can corrupt one's deliberation on the issues. For example, Gibson (2005) states: "*Violence 2 occurs when injustice in the society becomes oppressive and the people revolt by coming to the conclusion that they must end the injustice....The revolt, which can be violent or nonviolent, is the predictable outcome of Violence 1*" [*Italics added*] (p. 37).

How then is the average reader to reconcile or resolve the riddle that the "revolt" - one of the categorized forms of "violence" - can be "nonviolent"? How can violence be non-violent? Then again, perhaps, this perplexity to the ordinary mind is resolved in the linguist's scholarly mind.

This deficit in rigor and logic flows from the scant or shoddy definition of the subject under analysis. It is clearly a display of very weak scholarship by Dr. Gibson, as well as, an indication of her willingness to lower the bar to admit any argument which will foster her ill-founded ideology that Hinduism is a religion of violence.

### **Whom did "Cockroaches" Apply to?**

Gibson (2005): "An editorial in a daily newspaper showed the virulence of East Indian racism at the time of the general elections, by the writer stating that Talk Show hosts at a prominent African television station could incite Africans to mobilize against East Indians as happened in Rwanda where Hutus were mobilized against Tutsis by broadcasts defining Tutsis as 'cockroaches'. The writer suggested that legislation be put in place to prevent inflammatory broadcasts. The message of the editorial is that Africans are 'cockroaches' and so need to be controlled." Gibson then reproduces part of the editorial: "'Channel 9 was the infamous purveyor of an exhortation by one of its hosts that Indians who had voted for the PNCR should seek protection at Congress Place [PNCR headquarters]. This was such a provocative statement and redolent with various interpretations...'" (p. 74).

Critique: Gibson reveals in a footnote, the editorial was from the Stabroek News. This newspaper is not regarded as friendly to the PPP/C Government. Nevertheless, the blotch, it would seem, is that the editorial writer was an "Anand Persaud", an East Indian. Hence, the editorialist opinion is routinely branded as '*East Indian racism*.'

Now, let us look closely at the mention of "cockroaches" in the context which Gibson used it by following the sequencing of the ethnic groups and the offending



label. The relevant phrases are highlighted below in the parsed excerpt for easy tracing. We have:

The editorial writer cautioning that Talk Show hosts at a prominent African television station could incite Africans to mobilize against East Indians as happened in Rwanda where Hutus were mobilized against Tutsis by broadcasts defining Tutsis as ‘cockroaches.’ The writer suggested that legislation be put in place to prevent inflammatory broadcasts. The message of the editorial is that Africans are ‘cockroaches’ and so need to be controlled.

In the first three statements, by following sequence logic we get Africans, Hutus and Tutsis are ‘mapped’ to East Indians, Tutsis and cockroaches, respectively. Tutsis were defined as “cockroaches” in the Rwandan context. It follows then that the equivalent correspondence is “East Indians” who are the parallel “cockroaches” in the Guyana context, not Africans as Gibson readily affirms victimhood for.

This example illustrates how even a university senior lecturer’s willingness, even gullibility, to read every negative label as applying to her constituency – sociologically speaking, internalizing it – can wreak havoc in the lecturer’s mind, which then erodes her self-esteem; and by externalizing her deficit in objectivity go on to wreak havoc on the ‘other’ – in the Guyanese context, East Indians.

### Unreferenced Assertions

In numerous places of her writings Gibson (2005) has made arguments and assertions attributed to various sources but provide no references or ‘audit trail’. Here are a few such cases.

She talks about: *Manu*; “*Chatur Varna*”; “*In the Rigveda the shudra is described as... ‘to be expelled at will’ and ‘to be slain at will’*”; “*a woman of the black race, the Shudra people, meant only for enjoyment*”; “*Brahmins, on the other hand, are the master race*”; *et al*, (p. 31-2) but the reader cannot verify the authenticity of her assertions as they are unreferenced.

In the case of the “*RigVeda*”, it can be said categorically that Gibson’s statement is false! The only hymn in the Rig Veda dealing with the four varnas (castes) is the Purusa (Primeval Cosmic Being) *Hymn X:90* and no such verse exists. The footnote to verse 12 of the hymn in the widely quoted Ralph T. Griffiths translation, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (1992) states categorically: “This is the *only* passage in the Rgveda which enumerates the four castes” (p. 603).

This sample of instances underscores Dr. Gibson’s flawed scholarship, similar to the already noted false attribution to Seecharan.

### Conclusion

This brief evaluation of Kean Gibson’s thesis on ‘East Indian violence against Afro-Guyanese Blacks’ - easily extrapolated to the rest of the Caribbean area - highlights the danger inherent in her skewed ideology. Her preachings have the potential to incite the African flock who look up to her as an educated, and hence

objective, observer of the African condition vis a vis Indians. Her views on 'sacrificial violence' are especially worrisome as they seem to predict the unexplained massacres of Indians in Guyana. Her ideas would have been enlightening if her premises and deliberations on Hinduism were accurate. The opposite has been shown here. Her acknowledgement of research funding for two books from UWI is particularly troubling because of the poisonous content of these books. It is proposed that these Gibson's writings be subjected to the rigours of unbiased academic scrutiny.

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