

**Music, Trance and Dance in the Thaipusam *Kavady* Festival:
Reflections of a Select Group of South Africans**

Nirmala Gopal

Department of Criminology and Forensic Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
E-mail: gopal@ukzn.ac.za

KEYWORDS Thaipusam. Kavady. Trance. Dance. Music. Lord Muruga

ABSTRACT Hinduism in South Africa finds expression in a series of fasts, festivals and rituals. The Kavady festival is one of the most popular festivals observed annually by mostly Tamil-speaking Hindus in South Africa. This article examines how the Thaipusam Kavady festival is understood and explained by a select group of devotees in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This includes the significance of the festival for them, and in particular their understanding of the music and trance dance, about which there is a dearth of literature. Trance, dance, and music are seen as indispensable in helping raise devotees to a higher spiritual place and in coping with the physical pain exerted on the body. Most interviewees found the experience of Kavadi very rewarding and intend to continue participating in future years.