

Roots and All: (Anti)-Memories of Indian Diasporic Women Living in South Africa

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Abstract

Through memory work, this paper has contributed to global interest in diaspora and seeks to illuminate the lived experiences of Indian diasporic women living in South Africa. This qualitative study of four Indian diasporic academic women has highlighted their 'becoming' that is symbolic of an interaction between 'memory and metamorphosis.' Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of arborescent and rhizomatic systems (1987), through the metaphors of the tree root and canal rhizomes respectively, linked to their assertion that 'becoming is anti-memory' are explored with examples from the data. This paper highlights the way in which memory has shaped the stories that the participants have shared and has also emphasised the ways in which Indian diasporic women have selectively chosen to rupture from some of the cultural memories inherited from their motherland. The findings indicate that the lived experiences of the Indian diasporic women in the sample are mainly rhizomatic in nature since they have developed in metamorphic and even contradictory ways against the background of various ideologies, namely apartheid, democracy and patriarchy. Traces of arborescence are also evident. Since becoming is an anti-memory, the question that requires further investigation is: Can the Indian diasporic free her or himself from cultural memory of the motherland?

Keywords: memory, diaspora, Indian women, arborescence, rhizomes, Deleuze, Guattari

How a society knows itself, asserts and exhibits itself is governed by its memory and history (Chowdhury 2008: 12).

As a diasporic woman whose Indian roots have ‘rhizomatically’ ruptured in the African soil, the first author is guided by the philosophies of two icons who left their indelible mark in South Africa and around the world, namely Nelson R. Mandela and Mohandas K. Gandhi. Gandhi has advised, ‘Be the change that you wish to see in the world’, thereby highlighting the power of individual action towards the greater good of society (B’Hahn 2001 as cited in http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi). Nelson Mandela, who spent twenty-seven years in prison, played a pivotal role in dismantling apartheid and embracing Indians in the democratic South Africa. He has left South Africa a legacy of wisdom through his deeds and words. He said, ‘As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew that if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison’ (Nelson Mandela Quotes). As a healer, Mandela chose to leave the memories to his incarceration behind to create a ‘rainbow nation’ in South Africa. To describe similar views of memory Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the authors of the concepts of arborescent and rhizomatic systems, state that ‘becoming is anti-memory.’

During the early years of democracy, when nation-building was imperative in South Africa, anti-memory was both frowned upon and valued. For the whites the anti-memory was a convenient way of rationalising their privileges in the days of apartheid. For blacks the anti-memory of the injustices of the apartheid era – to forgive and forget – was deemed a necessary precursor to the creation of a democratic society. Being neither black nor white, there are many grey areas which present challenges and ambiguities for Indian diasporics, a minority group living in democratic South Africa. Through memory work the lived experiences of selected Indian diasporic women in South Africa are illuminated, highlighting the triumphs, challenges, ambivalences and contradictions in their becoming.

Etymologically derived from the Greek term *diaspeirein* – from *dia* (across) and *speirein* (to sow or scatter seeds) – diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories or countries (Braziel & Mannur 2003:1). ‘Indian Diaspora’ is a generic term used to describe the

people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India (HLCID 2002).

This paper is the revised version of an article written in response to a call for research by the journal *Man in India* on the theme ‘social and cultural world of the Indian’ (Govender & Sookrajh 2013). The authors argue that, since the arrival of Indians in South Africa, several generations have rooted and flourished and that, although the Indians who came to South Africa were disconnected from the cultural space of the motherland, they re-established cultural spaces in the country. The authors further argue that, for Indian diasporics, memories have played a significant role in individual and collective patterns of thought and that it is through memory work that the social meanings of the lived experiences of the Indian diasporic participants are uncovered.

The Indian diasporic living in South Africa has developed a dynamic ‘hyphenated identity,’ a concept explicated in this way by Chowdhury (2008:1) in his dissertation on memory and the Indian diaspora:

To be Indian in the diaspora is to be hyphenated, where the hyphen on the one hand connects, elicits similarities, commonalities, bonding – a shared origin, a common memory; but on the other hand, the hyphen is also that unbridgeable gulf, between the diaspora and the homeland. The hyphen is what allows the diasporic to claim an ‘Indian identity,’ it is also what keeps the diasporic eternally distant (Chowdhury 2008:1).

This hyphenated identity is a global phenomenon experienced by Indian diasporics throughout the world. The hyphenated identity is aptly described by Moodley (2013:6) when she states, ‘When I am in India I am South African, yet when I am in South Africa I am Indian.’ Similarly, international literature by Presaud (2013) argues that Indo-Caribbeans actively resist being categorised as ‘East Indians’ or as ‘coming from India’ and whilst they acknowledge their history they assert that the Caribbean is their homeland.

Through memory work elicited through stories, this qualitative study explores the lived experiences of Indian diasporic academic women in South Africa. The analogy of roots in the growth and becoming of the Indian diasporics in South Africa is examined through the lens of Deleuze and

Guattari's (1987) metaphors of arborescent and rhizomatic systems, symbolising the tree root and canal rhizomes which are linked to their explication of 'becoming as anti-memory'.

The authors argue that the lived experiences of Indian diasporic women living in South Africa have ruptured rhizomatically in boundless ways in their becoming by selectively choosing to deviate from the point of common memory to assert their individual identities. There are some tracings of arborescence emerging from the endurance of long term memory and this becoming in Chowdhury's terms is 'symbolic of an interaction between memory and metamorphosis' (2008:1).

The Historical Context

According to the first author's memory of school history, the year 1860 has been associated with the first arrival of Indians as indentured labourers in South Africa. However, contrary to this common belief, there is evidence of Indians having settled at the Cape from as early as 1653. Since the early 19th century as many as 1195 Indians were brought into the Cape Colony comprising 36.4% of the slave population (HLCID 2002:75). For the indentured labourers who arrived in South Africa to work in the sugarcane fields, the dislocation from the motherland occurred between the years 1860 and 1911 (Landy *et al.* 2003). Indians from different villages in India, with different religions and languages, brought different ethnicities to South Africa. The establishment of Indians in South Africa was not welcomed. 'Indians,' DF Malan, the architect of apartheid declared in his manifesto, 'are a foreign and outlandish element which is inassimilable' (HLCID 2002: 75).

'Apartheid,' or separateness, was the policy of strict racial segregation in South Africa from 1948 to 1994 (Norval 1996). As a result of apartheid, Indians were forced to maintain insular spaces by living in specific group areas, for example Chatsworth, and they attended racially exclusive schools.

During the apartheid era, Indians in South Africa were not subjected to a cleansing of the culture of their motherland. On the contrary they were insulated from other cultures in South Africa where this shared memory was fostered. Maharaj and Desai (2009:243) argue that MK Gandhi played a

significant role in consolidating Indianness that both looked to confront white discrimination and to keep alive the idea of a broader identity with the 'motherland'.

Whilst Mandela and other black leaders embraced Indians as allies, this was not a general attitude amongst blacks who clashed with Indians. Maharaj and Desai (2009) investigated the history of the Indian diaspora and the racial conflict by those who experienced it. These authors elaborated on poor perceptions of the Indians by other races in South Africa as well as the dilemmas experienced by Indians who were denied redress in the form of affirmative action provisions since the fall of apartheid.

While apartheid served as an insulator for the Indian culture, democracy served to expand the societal boundaries making access to other cultures more permeable. The later generations of the Indian diaspora had greater access to white integration which resulted in a dilution of their 'Indianness' and, in Chowdhury's terms, a hyphenated identity (Chowdhury 2008).

Landy *et al.* (2003:213), however, report that the Indian 'identity' is still very much alive in Durban. These authors explain that despite some vanishing elements such as vernaculars, two important markers of identity remain, namely religion (Hinduism and Islam) and culture (films, music).

Chowdhury (2008:20) cites Klein who asserts that the discipline of history interests itself with power, identity and politicised forms of memory and that historical trauma as an agent in history becomes a significant direction in cultural history. In presenting this paper on memory and the Indian diaspora in the context of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, the authors do not include historical trauma in their narrative to highlight victimhood but to emphasise the becoming of the Indian diasporic woman.

Objectives

The objective of this paper is to highlight the value of memory work as a way of contributing to the understanding of the lived experiences of Indian diasporic professional women living in South Africa. Memory is viewed from a dual perspective: as a methodological tool to retrieve stories from the participants and as a concept to illustrate that 'becoming is anti-memory' and is associated with rhizomatic rather than arborescent systems.

Through memory work this paper contributes to an understanding of the diaspora which is a vibrant area of research since there is a call for a theorisation that is not divorced from historical and cultural specificity (Brazier & Mannur 2003:3). International research on the diaspora highlights the tension between ‘cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation’ as ‘the shapes of cultures grow less bounded and tacit, more fluid and politicised.’ (Appadurai 2003:31-43). Appadurai (2003:42) elaborates that

As group pasts become increasingly parts of museums, exhibits, and collections..., culture becomes less what Bourdieu (1977) called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification and representation.

For the Indian diasporics living in South Africa, the ‘hyphenated identity’ (Chowdhury 2008) suggests commonalities as well as the ‘unbridgeable gulf’ with India, the motherland.

It is argued that, during the apartheid period, the larger politics of discrimination and the lack of freedom and opportunities faced by the Indian diasporic communities were compounded for Indian diasporic women who were further burdened by the domestic politics of patriarchy.

Gender, with regard to the Indian diaspora, is far from being a neutral construct, especially within the cultural heritage of patriarchy. Appadurai (2003:42-43) observed that women in particular may become pawns in the heritage politics of the household and are often subject to the abuse and violence of men who are themselves torn between heritage and opportunity in shifting spatial and political formations. The justification for choosing a sample of Indian academic and professional women was to increase the probability of a critical perspective on social and cultural issues through memory work as a focus instead of that of social justice. For these professional women, globalisation through technological development means that South Africa is not the sole space of acculturation. It can be argued, however, that for these Indian diasporic academic women living in South Africa, the challenges were amplified by issues of gender and race especially during the apartheid era. Hence, the fundamental purpose of memory work is to facilitate a heightened consciousness of how social forces and practices such as gender and race affect human experiences and how individuals and groups choose to respond to these social forces and practices.

Methodology

This qualitative study focuses on four Indian academic women – university lecturers and personnel – who presented selected stories, drawn from memory, of their lived experiences as Indian diasporic academics in South Africa, the land of their birth. A qualitative study within the interpretative paradigm is aligned with the research aim to ‘make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning that people bring to them’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:4). Furthermore, a qualitative inquiry was chosen because of its emphasis on a ‘holistic treatment of phenomena which requires looking at the historical contexts’ (Stake 1995:43) of these Indian diasporic academic women in order to understand their lived experiences in a land that is both nurturing and challenging.

A case study approach, that is, a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context (Yin 2009), was used to understand the lived experiences of these Indian diasporic academic women.

The researchers used a purposive sampling technique whereby subjects are consciously selected for ‘fitness for purpose’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:104). A total of seven academic women were interviewed by both authors together or separately in some cases. The interviews which lasted from about 45 minutes to 60 minutes were audio-recorded and transcribed. For the purpose of this paper, data from four participants, comprising one first-generation and three fourth-generation Indian diasporic academic women, are presented.

The following critical question was asked: What are your memories of your lived experiences as an Indian diasporic academic woman? The supporting questions were: To what extent through memory do you choose to preserve the inheritance of being ‘Indian’? To what extent do you surrender to the Indian cultural heritage including patriarchy? Is India still a key referent?

The participants were asked to describe a few critical moments as Indian diasporic women. The participants responded by telling stories drawn from memory to the researchers. The narratives comprised a ‘short topical story about a particular event’ (Chase 2008:59). As Thomas (1995:3), aptly states, the impulse to tell stories is so powerful that there is a sense in which ‘we are told by our stories.’

Stories drawn from memory are driven by two sets of two concerns.

The first has to do with the way in which memory shapes the stories we tell, in the present and in the past – especially stories about our own lives. The second has to do with what makes us remember: the prompts, the pretexts, of memory; the reminders of the past that remain in the present (Kuhn, cited in Mitchell & Weber 1999:220).

Drawing from the work of Amin and Govinden (2012), we emphasise that the stories are fragments from memory presented unsystematically and without unity. The stories are recollections; bits and pieces of conversations and observations based on personal experiences (Amin & Govinden 2012:325). This paper does not seek to capture truth but to illuminate the lived experiences of selected women through memory work.

Theoretical Framework

Data from the participants are explored through the concepts of arborescence and rhizome in relation to ‘becoming as anti-memory,’ as outlined in Deleuze and Guattari’s seminal work, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

Mazzei and McCoy (2010:504) assert that Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) theorising of arborescent and rhizomatic systems of thinking serves to bring ‘philosophy into closer contact with sociocultural issues’ (see Govender & Sookrajh 2013). This paper extends the use of the theoretical lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts by showing its links to memory and the becoming of Indian diasporic academic women.

For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the term rhizomatic, supported metaphorically by the canal rhizome, represents social systems that expand horizontally, producing multiple shoots that weave through the system with the potential to break off and create or map new possibilities for growth. An arborescent structure, according to them, is depicted in the metaphor of a root-tree which represents the tracing of pre-established paths and structure thereby signifying unidirectional progress. The arborescent system of thinking is marked by a linear unity of knowledge whilst the rhizomatic system is indicative of a cyclical unity.

To highlight circular or cyclic unity as opposed to linear unity, Deleuze and Guattari (1987:7-12) enumerate the six characteristics of the rhizome, which are the principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, assigning rupture, cartography and decalcomania.

The principles of connection and heterogeneity suggest that ‘any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:7). Multiplicities are rhizomatic and defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialisation according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The principle of assigning rupture highlights that a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. These lines always tie back to one another. Through the principles of cartography and decalcomania, Deleuze and Guattari (1987:10-12) highlight that the rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model but a mapping of new pathways.

The principle of connection, heterogeneity and multiplicity highlights the variation of the paths selected by the participants (Indian diasporic academic women) in terms of their conscious choices rather than following fixed patterns. In analysing the lived experiences of the participants, the principle of rupture serves to highlight breaking or collapsing of established structures as new paths are created. The rhizomatic characteristics of mapping and graphic arts emphasise the lines of flights or critical moments where the Indian diasporic women create new paths instead of following pre-established paths that typify the normative rules of tradition or Indian heritage.

The tree logic or arborescent thinking is a thinking of tracing and reproduction while the rhizome is a map. A point of distinction is made from the tree or root, which plots a point and fixes an order or structure (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:7). It should be emphasised that Deleuze and Guattari (1987:20) do not present these systems as opposed models or categories of good or bad.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987:293) define the concepts of becoming and memory in relation to the arborescent and rhizomatic systems as follows:

[B]ecoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating. Becoming is a verb with consistency all of its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to (1987:293).

They also clarify what they mean by memory:

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Man constitutes himself as a gigantic memory, through the position of the central point, its frequency and its resonance. Any line that goes from one point to another in the aggregate of the molar system, and thus defined by points answering to these mnemonic conditions of frequency and resonance is part of the arborescent system (1987: 293).

They explain that arborescence is the submission of the line to the point and that if one does not break with the arborescent schema, one does not reach becoming.

Becoming is the movement by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible: the rhizome, the opposite of arborescence; break away from arborescence. Becoming is anti-memory (1987:293).

The challenge presented to us as authors was to explore the data revealing the hyphenated identities of the Indian diasporic academic women in terms of their interaction between their common or shared memory and metamorphosis as they veer through the challenges of various ideologies namely, apartheid, democracy and patriarchy. In terms of Deleuze and Guattari's framework, we had to illustrate with examples drawn from the data and show the connection between the metaphors of the rhizomatic to signify metamorphosis and arborescence as adherence to memory.

Findings from Case Studies

Deshnie: Indianness sets you free or makes you a slave and victim

Drawing from her memory, Deshni a fourth generation Indian diasporic woman in the age category 50-55, describes a critical moment she experienced as an undergraduate Bachelor of Music student during the 1980s:

As a student at the University of Durban-Westville I was tutored by an all-white staff. However, this contingent of lecturers also taught at

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Natal University in Durban that was better resourced. A private arrangement was made between the deans of both universities that allowed the small group of B Mus students to use the Natal University Music library. However, being Indians we would have to leave by 5pm so as to not be found in a so-called white area after dark. On one of my afternoons spent in the library, being caught up with preparation for an assignment, I lost track of time and looked up to see twilight setting and it was getting on to 6 o'clock.

Deshnie's memory of her experience as an Indian diasporic female during the years of apartheid highlights the way of life for marginalised communities living in South Africa. The white universities had better facilities and, as an Indian, Deshnie was not allowed to be on the premises of the University of Natal after 5pm. Her realisation that she had broken the curfew is reminiscent of the fairytale, Cinderella, where the protagonist had to engender an escape. Deshnie describes how she made her exit:

I grabbed my belongings, hastened down the wooden staircase and bolted for the street. The run down to Sydney Road is a mere flash of memory now as I recall security guards close on my heels.

For Deshnie, this experience was no fairy tale but depicts the harsh realities endured as an Indian diasporic woman living in South Africa during the era of apartheid. Her response indicates the fear of being caught by the guards. Yet the enormity of this experience is ruptured by focusing on the humorous side to the shoes that she was wearing that carried her to the safety of the Indian bus rank. She explains:

Why I wore those in-fashion clogs of the time- I grin at it now... so reminiscent of the Dutch! Well those clogs carried my heaving body down to the Indian bus rank. Standing at length in the relative safety of a packed Unit 7 Indian bus bares its own memories.

The Unit 7 that Deshnie recalls refers to a spatial allocation in Chatsworth, an area previously reserved for the Indian community. Through this memory Deshnie reflects:

Does this lived experience as a student of classical music, more so as an Indian female student, surpass my Indianness or, as I wish to think, has it served to establish and maintain it? Certainly the latter.

Deshnie's memory of this experience highlights that Indianness was maintained through the insular spaces created by apartheid. The opportunity of 'becoming' other was restricted to 'being' Indian during the era of apartheid.

In exploring the experiences of Indian diasporic women living in South Africa, the historical context is a significant factor. In Deshnie's experience, the demise of apartheid paved the way for her rhizomatic rupturing as an Indian female as insular boundaries were forced to give way to the 'other'. She describes this in the following extract:

The second critical moment I would like to describe based on memory was when I was appointed on the management as Head of Department of a former Model C school. I was historically the first non-white member of management in a school with a long English tradition. Furthermore, I had come from another city and was quite the outsider. Although India was not a key referent for me, the Indian township in the area was. I had not known it well and was not from there, but it certainly seemed to raise eyebrows for many who thought I had hailed from there. Whatever perceptions, experiences, thoughts, histories associated within the social dynamics of that township, I shall not fully know. However, during some very turbulent days of adjustment and school transformation, my Indian identity was ruptured by those who believed that my Indianness equalled inferiority and subservience. Being Head of Department, as an Indian woman, came with much patience, tolerance and long-suffering within an all-white environment. However, my expertise, experience, personality and willingness to learn proved over time an unwavering, unchanging resolve for excellence, character and presence for the benefit of my profession. Would I have been any different if I were not Indian? I think not. It is my Indian identity and nature that has shaped and framed much of who I am.

During apartheid, Deshnie's experience of running away from an university

designated for whites after the curfew time was up is contrasted to her being appointed as Head of Department in an all-white staff school, thus rupturing insular spaces. Her application for this position heralds a rhizomatic rupturing from the fear she experienced at during the apartheid days of being found on the premises of a white institution. She relates her 'turbulent' experiences she has had as a result of stereotypical perceptions that whites held regarding Indians by associating them with spatially designated areas reserved for Indians through the Group Areas Act. She maintains that an arborescent thread of being Indian has enabled her 'unwavering, unchanging resolve for excellence, character and presence for the benefit of [her] profession' to rhizomatically assert herself in a changing environment.

As an Indian diasporic woman, apartheid is not the only challenge experienced by Deshnie. Her lived experiences are also influenced by the heritage of patriarchy that still continues to control the lives of Indian women in many parts of the world. She explains the contradictions and ambiguities which confronted her as an Indian woman:

The prominent figures in my life have been my dad and my husband and both have been conservative traditional people who have old school values... a mindset of how an Indian woman must be or conduct herself in terms of relationships. You could not break free in terms of thought because on the one hand you would be disrespecting values and morals and ideals deemed to be important and necessary in terms of who you are in terms of your identity. You would also be regarded in colloquial terms as a 'loose woman'. You would be regarded as being frivolous if you questioned the status quo. You would be regarded as unconventional, untraditional and undisciplined if you broke away from that and actually questioned the values and morals of your upbringing in term of your Indianness. When I say that I mean: Do not question your elders and whatever decision they make. You do not question the hierarchy with a family where the husband is the head of a home and whatever his decisions are spoken or unspoken or whatever his role is, whether you agree with it or not you don't question it. You follow an unspoken ...untainted status quo that has been passed down to you almost inherently internally right.

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Deshnie's experiences as an Indian woman are firmly guided by the patriarchs of her family who reflect a strongly arborescent view of the conduct of an Indian woman, especially in terms of relationships. Passivity and obedience are valued by patriarchs who head Indian families. In a patriarchal sense maintaining or bringing honour to one's family is valued. Success of the Indian woman in terms of education is also valued and this contradiction is explained by Deshnie:

Yet there is an expectation from within your family, especially from the patriarchal figures of being a free thinker, being critical, making a difference, being politically aware, being intellectual, being academic in order to bring value to the family. It's almost a given that education, which is highly prized in the Indian home by the dad and the mum but especially the dad, brings honour, respect and dignity. Education is meant to make you a free thinker...That very Indianness that creates your being and sets you free has done just the opposite that made you a slave and victim.

Drawing from her memories as an Indian woman living in South Africa, Deshnie highlights the cultural contradictions which, on one hand, encourage critical thinking as an academic but, on the other hand, encourage passivity and subservience to the influence of patriarchy.

For Deshnie, a rhizomatic rupture was evident when she developed in academia and at that time she indicated that her 'marriage came apart.' Divorce in a patriarchal society is frowned upon and in a sense Deshnie defied both her father and her husband by challenging the status quo of an Indian woman.

Neela: The Gujarati Indian male changed his idea of a wife

As a Gujarati-speaking first-generation Indian diasporic woman, Neela's fate was almost pre-determined by the normative rules of the closed community in which she grew up. Young women were groomed to take up their positions as wives to Gujarati-speaking men. Such was the destiny of Neela's older sisters. A strange twist had altered Neela's destiny since the young Gujarati males were looking for educated marriage partners. She explained:

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When I was growing up in the 1970s, the Gujarati identity was being like kind of bounded and protected so the thought of marrying outside of your caste, outside of your linguistic group, was frowned upon and not tolerated at all. Girls were frequently pulled out of school at the end of primary school to start learning about the house in anticipation of an early marriage. Values came about culturally, whether it came from India or it was from my parents.

What gave me a little bit of an advantage was that the Gujarati Indian male changed his idea of a wife. He did not want an uneducated girl. As much as my parents wanted to pull me out of school, they left me a little longer so that I could have an advantage over other girls.... And of course, they felt very betrayed when I fell in love [with a Muslim] because it was not somebody from the same caste.

From Neela's experience it is apparent that the values of cultural communities were strong influences that sought to maintain the common memory brought from their homeland. Neela's marriage to a Muslim man was indeed a rhizomatic rupture from the expected path of marrying within the same community.

Whilst Neela had shattered the arborescent expectations of the Gujarati community, her marriage presented her with another set of arborescent thinking espoused by that community. She explained:

When I got married, I also wanted to be the good daughter-in-law, which is at odds with being an academic. So if my parents, my husbands' parents, were alive, I would not have been an academic. So my life as an academic began when my daughter finished her schooling and with the death of all these people in the family and that released me from following the path.

From this extract it is evident that patriarchy was intended to be strongly arborescent in nature, demanding a tracing of traditional ways of living. The death of significant others released Neela from that path and enabled her to rhizomatically map her own career path.

In describing her development as an academic she related that she had support from her husband who looked at it from a singular perspective:

His thinking was, 'If I empower my wife, she would work in the university and earn more money' without him thinking how that would change my thinking about marriage, life and children. What he did not anticipate is how I would shift socially, culturally and politically.

Neela's university education and development in academia reveals another rupture or line of flight in her experience as an Indian diasporic woman in multiple ways: socially, culturally and politically.

Neela also shared her memories of her lived experiences in South Africa which highlighted the cultural history of a land once divided to keep its inhabitants separate. She explained that 'during apartheid at a time when we were not sort of accepted as South Africans and it was almost a sense of being in a no-man's-land ... not in India ... in South Africa, but not in South Africa in a sense because you were not white'.

As an Indian diasporic woman, Neela felt the shunning of the apartheid regime, in which 'the hierarchical construction of race in South Africa and its justification resulted in race being the central tool in the manifestation of a segregated society' (Moodley 2013:2). During the years of apartheid, this rejection was experienced by Neela as rootlessness or a lack of belonging.

For many Indians living in South Africa, India represented the motherland, a sense of belonging and was imagined with much nostalgia. Like most South Africans, Neela visited India with much anticipated hope. She shared her memory of her first visit to India.

I went to India in 1975 and I said: I don't belong here. There was an intense shattering of who I was. We never had family here and suddenly to go and meet your family and still not feel that part of that family so that idea of being in no-man's-land was intensified.

Neela's first visit to India dispelled the imagined sense of belonging to the motherland thereby compounding the feeling of a lack of belonging.

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After the dismantling of apartheid, Neela experienced a greater sense of belonging to South Africa:

Strangely enough I went back to India on a conference and this was after the fall of apartheid, and feeling very proud to reclaim the South African identity. They played the Indian national anthem and I knew at that time that I am not 'Indian,' I am South African because I felt more emotional when the South African national anthem was played.

For Neela, like so many other Indians living in South Africa, the collapse of apartheid freed them from the memory of an insular and arborescent identity of being 'Indian' to a rhizomatic 'becoming' within the broader identity of being proudly South African.

Devina: Being voiceless to asserting an Indian voice

Devina is a fourth-generation Indian diasporic academic born in the mid-1960s during the apartheid era and raised in a working-class environment.

Devina's lived experiences in South Africa, the land of her birth, were marked by the historical and contextual realities of the social engineering of apartheid that was intent on keeping races separate. As a result, she lived an insulated life in an area designated for Indians, went to an Indian school, studied at an 'Indian university' and taught at an 'Indian school'. She recalls that her marginal position as 'black' was accepted within the context of the historical-political stance of the country which encouraged subservience and fear of authority.

Her first critical moment as an Indian diasporic woman was when she was offered a secondment to lecture in a previously 'whites-only' teachers' training college during the mid-1990s. This experience was indeed a cultural shock for her. Her Indianness in a mainly white, racially constituted environment for the first time destabilised her notion of being Indian. She questioned the adequacy of her shared memory of living in an insulated community as she tried to 'fit into' a community which espoused western values regarding speech, dress and religion. She indicated that she felt 'voiceless'. That was an uprooting experience for Devina. She felt dislocated

for the first time having left her cocoon of Indianness which left her feeling 'incomplete and vulnerable.'

This cocoon of being Indian insulated her from others in South Africa. As a university-qualified teacher, she held a position of strength within the Indian community. Her assimilation into a multicultural community was a traumatising experience and she felt inadequate, for not having had access to what Bourdieu (1986) describes as the 'cultural capital' of the white world.

In her journey, Devina also observed that those colleagues who had obtained Master's degrees exuded confidence. She realised the need for academic status and went on to upgrade her qualifications to a doctoral level.

A second critical moment for Devina was during the writing of her PhD. Once again, she experienced the weight of the dominance of white culture until she decided that she was going to make her voice as an Indian heard. A significant shift came through her PhD work when she chose to deliberately use Sanskrit words. She explained: 'If academia can use Greek words like *Telos*, then why could I not use the word *dharma*?' She drew from her Hindu background, and included theories of the soul in her PhD.

She was warned by her supervisor, a white male, that it could compromise her obtaining her PhD. She asserted herself for the first time as an Indian living in democratic South Africa knowing that she wanted to be true to herself without a care for the consequences. Her success was doubly rewarding since she left her mark of Indianness on her PhD.

Through memory work Devina was able to re-trace what she deemed critical moments as an Indian diasporic living in South Africa. She revealed sensitive moments when she questioned the value of the arborescent or deep-rooted memory of being Indian when she attempted to 'fit into' a multi-cultural environment. Her experience of other cultures was limited during the apartheid years and her first multi-cultural encounter signalled the need for new lines of flight towards academia to enhance her possibilities of survival in the field of education. She saw the need for academic studies and subscribed to it even though it reflected strong western values and culture. Her rhizomatic development was most evident during her PhD studies when she chose not to follow the tracings of typical western notions of acceptability and asserted her cultural identity as an Indian through her use of selected Sanskrit words such as 'dharma' instead of using its Greek or English equivalents. This signified her 'becoming as anti-memory' because she did

not anchor herself arborescently within western notions of acceptability in the academic field but rather chose to ‘stand out’ which is rhizomatic in relation to her initial concern to ‘fit in’

Jayshree: I am like a chameleon. I have so many different shades

Jayshree is a fourth generation Indian woman living in South Africa, whose biggest challenge is living by the values of the Indian community where patriarchy is of high importance. As a result she admitted that her lived experiences were marked by masquerades and pretensions. She explained:

I am very aware that I am an Indian woman in my community. My Indianness is very predominant at home – even in the way I bring up my children. There are certain things that they have to do, that are not western at all. There are things that I have learnt from my mom and dad, my grandparents and some of those things I have difficulty explaining to them [her children] why they have to do it that way.

Although she endeavoured to uphold her Indian roots and values, she was challenged in India during her recent visit there. She explained:

I found that because I had gone on holiday without my husband, all of them in that little community [in India] had looked at me as if something was wrong, you know: ‘How can you bring the children alone?’ and I was questioned a lot on that and it was the first time that I thought that people are frowning upon me travelling alone and I had three girls with me. That is one of the things that I brought back from India. It got me thinking about the decision I took to travel alone with my children.

Jayshree made a concerted effort to uphold the memory of her Indian heritage in the way she raised her children in South Africa. Her visit to India with her three daughters signified a rhizomatic rupture from the traditional patriarchal cultural ways by travelling without her husband. This was a critical moment

for Jayshree who had to reflect on ways in which her life in South Africa had ruptured rhizomatically from some practices still valued in India.

One of the areas that Jayshree hid from the community was the change in her family dynamics with regard to the reversal of roles between her husband and herself. One of the cultural expectations of an Indian woman is that she should cook the meals for the family. In her becoming a professional, Jayshree has relegated this task to her husband. This, however, was done in secrecy from the rest of the extended family to protect the identity of her husband as patriarch of the family. Although Jayshree was a key decision maker within the confines of the nuclear family, she took on a pretentious role as a subservient wife. She explained:

So within our closed doors, we make certain decisions. I would decide what we are doing. But really when we go out into the community or with family, I would step back and say that it is his decision and that is the decision we are taking. I do that unconsciously actually. I can switch sides so quickly.

... I have watched my husband take offense during the 23 years of marriage. He does not have a problem with how I behave in my family. But in his family an example would be that I know now not to tell his mother that he cooks at home. Yes, he does (laughter). He cleans up, he picks the clothes and he loads the machine. But those are the things that we don't divulge. But only because of the way he responds when his mother says, 'Oh, you cook!' Then I know that those are the things I should not be sharing. I certainly would not tell my own mother that my husband does the cooking. She often asks about the cooking, he [her husband] does it or my daughter – so I don't even do the traditional thing at home. But I live the pretence of doing it.

In her becoming as an Indian diasporic woman, Jayshree has rhizomatically ruptured from her traditional roles. Her dilemma lies in her attempts to mask this multiplicity or line of flight from the expected path and display that which is expected of her in terms of cultural norms rather than to assert her break with traditions.

Marriage out of one's caste system or religion was generally unacceptable within the Indian community. Within this context Jayshree, who was born to a Hindi-speaking family whose ancestors came from North India, chose to marry a Tamil-speaking man whose ancestors were South Indian. She indicated that her father was a liberal man who warned her to think carefully about her choice but did not object to her marriage. It was her mother who had difficulty in coming to terms with her father's decision to allow her to make the choice. Jayshree explained that although both her husband and she were Hindus, the customs and rituals of people from a Tamil-speaking background were very different from those of people from a Hindi-speaking background. Over the years she has given in to accepting the customs of her husband's culture albeit without belief in them. Through the years she has had to make several compromises regarding her beliefs. Recently, however, as she has become more critical through academia, she is now asserting her beliefs to include some North Indian customs. She explained:

We have had so many family members pass away and we are discussing it. He [her husband] is quite fixed about what will happen for me and I am quite fixed about what will happen for me [customs relating to final rites upon death]. At the moment the children can't understand that I still want certain North Indian rituals to be done for me because I was born that way – I may have married out. The children are saying that I have made all these sacrifices all these years and embraced so many different things, so why now and why this? This is difficult to get them to understand that I am like a chameleon. I have so many different shades really that I can change and they are not really sure what I am. I can be a very traditional South Indian wife and sometimes I want to assert my North Indian heritage.

Jayshree's North Indian heritage is deeply or arborescently rooted within her. Although she may have practiced some of the South Indian rituals and customs, there is little faith in that. Her children's questioning of 'so why now and why this' alludes to Jayshree's strong identity as a person of North Indian ancestry. Despite living in the rainbow nation of multi-cultural, multi-racial South Africa, she holds the long-term memory of her heritage

arborescently. Yet she chose to rhizomatically rupture from traditional roles of her choice (such as cooking) which is valued even within her own cultural heritage. Her comparison of herself to a chameleon is indicative of her adaptability in her becoming as well as her confusion.

Discussion

The findings indicate that, while some traces of arborescence are evident, the lived experiences of the four Indian academic women are far from being structured, fixed and linear but have developed in unstable, metamorphic and even contradictory ways against the background of various ideologies, namely apartheid, democracy and patriarchy. The lived experiences of the Indian diasporic academic women demonstrate a strong resonance with the rhizomatic principles of multiplicity and rupture and the mapping of unchartered paths.

One of the contextual realities of the people of the Indian diaspora is that, during the days of indentured labour and since, people from various places in India, with different ethnicities, religions and languages settled in South Africa. In addition to enduring the struggle to live in freedom during the days of apartheid, these groups of Indians were ironically committed to keeping their own ethnicities, language groups and castes insular. Marriage out of one's caste system or religion was unacceptable. Two of the participants, Neela and Jayshree, chose to rhizomatically rupture these traditions by marrying out of their caste.

Neela's Gujarati heritage had set the points of an arborescent system by predetermining the fate of young Gujarati females as prospective wives to Gujarati-speaking males within a patriarchal society. Neela's becoming was rhizomatic since she ruptured the arborescent system by falling in love with her marriage partner rather than succumbing to the fixed tradition of arranged marriages. Neela further ruptured rhizomatically by marrying out of her caste thereby venturing out of the fixed points instead of adhering to the memory created by that cultural society. She also indicated that her entry into academia was only possible as a result of the death of the elders in her family. In a sense, these elders held the memory of a set culture to be lived within the structure of an arborescent framework. Therefore the passing away of the elders in her family created an anti-memory of a fixed path thereby allowing her to become an academic.

As a Hindu, Jayshree chose to marry a Hindu who was not of the language group of her North Indian ancestry. Although she was a fourth generation Indian diasporic living in South Africa, the cultural tradition of marrying within one's own ethnic and language group was arborescently fixed and valued. Her choosing to marry out of her ethnic group signified a line of flight from the expected path. Although she had adhered to the cultural ways of her South Indian Tamil-speaking husband, in some ways she still anchored arborescently to the identity of her North Indian Hindi-speaking cultural group. For her the hyphenated identity was amplified. Being an Indian diasporic living in South Africa presented its own challenges as she sought to hold on to 'Indian values.' True to her own description of herself – 'I am like a chameleon' – she chose some aspects of holding onto the traditional role and dismisses others. She kept up the masquerade by playing down her role in her family's decision making process so that her husband can uphold his dignity as head of the family in a patriarchal community. She chose to relinquish her traditional role of cooking for her family while ensuring that the matriarchs of her family (both her mother and mother-in-law) were not informed of this.

Deshnie's highlighted the Indian cultural contradictions which, on one hand, promoted critical thinking as an academic but, on the other hand, encouraged passivity and subservience to the influence of patriarchy. Deshnie's divorce from her husband of twenty-five years signified a rhizomatic rupture from fixed traditions. Her rhizomatic becoming signified an anti-memory of the traditional notion of marriage as 'until death does us part.' Another rupture in Deshnie's becoming was the anti-memory of the historical trauma of running away from a white institution (the university) during the days of apartheid. She chose to look back at the event with humour by recalling the escape she made in her Dutch clogs. In post-apartheid South Africa, her application for a management post in a former white school, however, signified her willingness to traverse uncharted paths. It can be described as rhizomatic.

The principle of rupture in relation to the lived experiences of the participants signifies defining or critical moments when these women 'broke' or 'shattered' images of being typically Indian, which can be related to the heritage of patriarchy, contextual realities of apartheid, its abolishment or any other individual matter.

For Neela, apartheid signified 'being in a no-man's-land ... not in

India ... in South Africa but not in South Africa'. This indicated a sense of insecurity, uncertainty and ambivalence experienced by Neela in her land of birth. The dismantling of apartheid resulted in a rupture of how Neela experienced South Africa bringing about greater certainty. She felt a strong sense of belonging to South Africa when she heard its national anthem being sung at a conference in India, thus affirming her identity as a South African of Indian descent.

In the act of keeping separate, apartheid contributed to the social and cultural alienation of Indians from the white race group in South Africa. For Devina the insulation of different races according to the Group Areas Act meant that she did not have access to the 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1986) of the dominant white culture. Her initial interaction with whites presented an upheaval for her and she felt 'inassimilable' into this new ground of multi-cultures. Her strategy was first to upgrade her qualifications to match those of the dominant white culture. Her PhD studies signified another critical moment resulting in a new line of flight where she sought to rupture and challenge traditional notions of academia with its strong western bias by incorporating Sanskrit terms from her Hindu culture.

Overall the findings indicate that, for these Indian diasporic women, becoming has been rhizomatic where they have chosen to chart their own maps instead of tracing the already established paths of a shared memory. The findings also indicate that, for these women, there are still traces of arborescence in selected experiences, affirming what Chowdhury (2008) terms a hyphenated identity where diasporics retain some shared memories from the motherland and assert the identity of their land of birth.

Conclusion

Through memory work, this paper has contributed to the global interest in diaspora that seeks to understand the lived experiences of Indian diasporic communities living in South Africa. The qualitative study of the lived experiences of four Indian diasporic academic women has highlighted the symbolic dimension of the interaction between 'memory and metamorphosis.' It has also highlighted the way in which memory has shaped the stories shared by the participants and has emphasised the ways in which Indian diasporic women have selectively chosen to rupture from some of the cultural memories inherited from their motherland whilst holding onto others.

The value of using the theoretical lens of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic and arborescent models to explain the lived experiences of Indian diasporic academic women is to acknowledge that 'there are knots of arborescence in rhizomes and rhizomatic offshoots in roots'. The findings also indicate that while traces of arborescence are evident, the lived experiences of these Indian academic women are far from being structured, fixed and linear but have developed in unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory ways against the background of various ideologies, namely apartheid, democracy and patriarchy.

The rhizomatic model explains the lived experiences of Indian diasporic academic women as a process of sustaining itself through perpetual collapsing and construction. The collapsing of cultural traditions regarding the memory of patriarchal practices of marriage and the role of the women are evident. Apartheid in a sense fostered the memory of Indianness by creating insular spaces. In post-apartheid South Africa, the women were able to metamorphose themselves through asserting their Indian diasporic identities in spaces that were previously not accessible. Against this sporadic rhizomatic growth, there are traces of arborescence emerging from these subjects' long-term memory (regarding family, race or society) that foregrounds these experiences.

As Indian diasporics, these women have experienced the constant tension between holding onto cultural memory and their own metamorphosis. Deleuze and Guattari explain that the line system of becoming is opposed to the point system of memory. Becoming is the movement by which the line frees itself from the point. This becoming is an anti-memory. Can the Indian diasporic free itself from cultural memory of the motherland?

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