Chapter 7
Indian Problem, Indian Menace, Indian Ubiquity: Indian South Africans at the Intersections

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Abstract
As sophisticated as colonization was, it was its own ouroboros – the gnostic symbol expressing the unity of all things, material and spiritual, which changes form in an eternal cycle of destruction and recreation. Indian indenture entered into such a cycle, a cycle from near slavery to diaspora to global trans-migration. The idea of Indian ubiquity is now real. Indian culture is a palimpsest. Old language and new reasoning appear in simultaneity. It purveys the brutalized Indian life-story mythically as the greatest of human adventures.

Keywords: Indian, South Africa, Migration, Indenture, Diaspora

1 Introduction
From problem, to menace, to ubiquity suggests two critical features of Indian indenture: the first is that the history of Indian indenture proves positive social change, economic development, and integration in the country of destination; and the second is that no other diasporic group in history has settled in more countries of the world, proving the claim of Indian ubiquity. Yet, Indian indenture was received with extreme attitudes by the colonizers. Yet over time, towards the end of indentureship; the appearance of descendants and increased migration flows, there was a softening of attitudes, not necessarily translating either as absolute tolerance nor accommodation. Rather, the colonizers were

forced to politically accommodate Indians as part of society, who qualified for citizenship post indenture.

Gandhi's South African struggles argued for rights under the dual category of citizen/subject (Majumdar 2013). Combined with *Satyagraha*, the new method that involved truth and nonviolence, as well as by petitioning authorities of the Crown in India and Britain, the colonized respectfully argued for their rights. The labels of 'problem' and 'menace' was evident to the colonizers only after the contract period of indentureship ended and when descendants were entitled to rights as citizens. Accordingly, 'problem' and 'menace' came to the realization of the colonizers rather late, i.e. when the allocation of legal status to Indians was required for the purpose of government. The Indian problem translated into three options for the colonizers: should Indians be allocated to their own areas of residence and trade; or better, remove Indians permanently, since they were 'aliens'; or better yet, 'squeeze' them out and force them to return to their homeland (Aiyar & Stuart 1925).

Indian ubiquity was a very different label – more likely a self-label. Referring to an article on Indian migration in the Kolkatha-based newspaper, *The Statesman* (Reporter 1980), Lal, an academic from the Australian National University, acquiesced that both poor and educated class Indians could be found all over the world (Lal 1998). 'Indians are ubiquitous', declares the article. These communities have their own Little India; curry shops selling tandoori chicken, tikka masala, idli and dosa; CD/DVD outlets; and temples and mosques celebrating Diwali, Eid and Dussehra.

However, *The Stateman's* article appeared in 1980. It had no foreknowledge of what was to come later. The combination of rising of colonialism and capitalism led to the recognition of abundant cheap labour in India. This opportunity was hardly wasted by Empire, given the prospects for economic and military domination of extensive parts of the world. There is a Shakespearian irony here – as Empire's colonization project expanded, so did the deepening of Indian diaspora world-wide. Moving away from the dramatic ironies in the literature of Empire, diasporic theory would invariably encounter conceptual, transitional and integrational problems. Diaspora was not an event, but a dynamic system of transference, assimilation and prosperity within the host cultures.

Accordingly, *The Statesman's* article and Lal's observation regarding Indian ubiquity are both a negligible celebration of the diaspora and a lack of recognition of progress by the diasporas beyond Little India and curry shops.

The diasporas metamorphosized into citizenry of the host countries over time. In the first instance, theory did not account for value-add of migration, adaptation to, and adoption of the host country by migrant groups. Historical accounts confirm that many made the move to accept new offers at the ending of indenture. They chose land ownership, agricultural activity, government and service sector jobs. Which Indian township did not boast of some 'teacher'; 'office uncle'; 'newspaper man'; 'cook'; or 'barman'?

In the second instance, theory did not account for human capability and for the role of household micro-economics, which embodied personal growth, cooperation, altruism, religious optimism and the universal idea of one humanity. There is a clear identifiable stage of Indian progress past the teacher and newspaper man. These are the scientists, professors, stateman and states-women, CEOs of global companies, and Lords and Ladies of the Late Empire.

In the third instance, new migration and diaspora theory are suggested. Globally, many types of migration are on the increase, in particular forced migration and displacement. There is an array of groups such as political refugees, alien residents, guest workers, immigrants, expellees, ethnic and racial minorities, and overseas communities seeking out new existence in targeted countries. (That is a body of work beyond this study.) In the case of Indian South Africans, there is anecdotal evidence of how globalization has influenced young people and families to seek employment and a new life in the 'big five' English-speaking countries, i.e. the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK (Singh 2008). Consequently, a sense of triple identity developed, i.e. when Indian South Africans migrate to one of these countries, they continue to adhere to a South African identity, since South Africa is their country of birth, as well as to India, for apparently deeply sentimental reasons.

The purpose of this chapter is to unravel the under-theorization of diaspora relating to Indians world-wide. There is a gap in the conceptual understanding of how Indians of indenture progressed historically, developmentally and globally to the current phase known as new migration. The under-theorization has led to discontinuities of understanding acculturation, identity, political participation and diasporic globality in the 21st century.

Towards this goal, the chapter engages in a critical analysis of Indian diaspora, with particular reference to South Africa. The structure of the chapter begins by describing the error of under-theorization; then borrows from Amartya Sen's theory of human capability in order to view human mobility as freedom to choose where to live, rather than simply respond to one-dimensional

push-and-pull factors. The hope is to stimulate the conceptual space for theory and a richer understanding of human mobility. The chapter then attempts to combine intersectionality with the lens of cosmopolitism towards a new conceptualization of Indian identity. In order to support the theoretical reorganization of Indian diaspora, the chapter needs to engage with some critical historical experiences, as well as engage with gendered indenture so well captured in literacy criticism. Finally, the chapter concludes by opening the conceptual pathway to diasporic theory.

2 Under-theorisation, Identity and Conflict

Mahmood Mamdani's compelling analysis of the colonial legacy underscores why democratization experienced lingering limitations in post-independence Africa (Mamdani 2018). Colonial rule is understood in three ways: 'direct', 'indirect' and apartheid. Mamdani argues that this terminology translated into benign instruments of despotism. Direct rule denied rights to subjects on a racial basis; indirect rule included subjects into customary or traditional rule, native councils, Bantustans[1] and the infamous Tricameral Parliamentary system; and apartheid, which was understood by leftist's politics as 'colonialism of a special type'[2]. Apartheid, Mamdani shows, was actually the generic form of the colonial state in Africa (Mamdani 2018). The colonial authorities mastered the art of cultural politics. They infused a form of authoritarianism into cultural forms where they existed, which had the knock-on effect of producing tension between urban and rural, and in particular, between ethnic groups. Apartheid was basically decentralized despotism, as witnessed in the system of Bantustans.

[1] A Bantustan refers to the territories set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa and (the then) South-West Africa (now Namibia), as part of the policy of apartheid.

[2] South Africa was not a colony, but an independent state. Independence to South Africa by Britain in 1910 was not a victory over colonialism. Power was transferred not to the masses of South Africa, but to the white minority; hence, colonialism of a special type, in which the oppressing white minority occupied the same territory as the oppressed majority, living side by side with one another.

Without lessening the state of tensions in other areas of the country including Sophiatown in Johannesburg and District Six in Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal is a classic case study. The design of decentralized despotism appears to prevail in the province to this day, which plays out in violent, economic and political contestations between black African and Indian communities living side by side. The province has experienced three waves of inter-communal violence: the infamous 1949 Cato Manor riots proved to have been instigated by white security forces (Manson 1981); the 1985 Inanda-Phoenix riots, having violent causal roots in both the anti-apartheid struggle and anti-Indian sentiments, appear to still define the present state of Indo-African relations (Thiara 1999); and the July 2021 civil unrest and turmoil in Durban, a political tale involving the former state president that brought with it a new wave of vicious race relations (Elumalai et al. 2022).

Mottiar and Bond suggest that in the light of state failure, protest activities and protest victories in Durban has been an important mechanism through which citizens have made gains in the struggle for improved socio-economic conditions (Mottiar and Bond 2012). The very high levels of demonstrations, also known as 'service-delivery' protests, suggest a high level of social discontent among citizens. The discontent can turn violent, simmer on the back-burner, and even turn xenophobic. Herein also lies Mamdani's 'decentralized despotism', where a backward-looking localism forms the agenda, rather than a progressive, forward-looking form of protest to assert political and economic rights. This localized backwardness lives and lurks in the Durban region, waiting for another trigger from decadent and opportunistic forces.

The concept of social distancing is a useful instrument for understanding group conflict, immigration and social and spatial organization (Pettigrew 1960, Jackson 2010). A 2011 study indicates dramatic changes may be taking place in South Africa (Durrheim et al. 2011). White respondents showed declining levels of prejudice, the opposite of the historical attitude to the so-called 'colour bar', and a negative change in attitudes of black African respondents towards other groups.

One of the critical projects of the post-1994 government has been social cohesion. Social cohesion is earnestly pursued as a means to achieve a just and equal society, to quell xenophobic attitudes and violence, and to encourage a united nation. In the South Africa context, social cohesion is seen as both a social compact between government and citizens on the one hand, and as a policy instrument for nation-building on the other hand. However, over time,

social cohesion has come to take on a different meaning. Some studies argue that social cohesion is formulated to serve a deep political purpose. The social cohesion project appears to produce a version of nation that supports a narrative seeking to solidify the African National Congress's hegemony (Abrahams 2016). The electoral performance of the African National Congress over the last twenty years shows a decline in voter support, with particular reference to Indians and Coloureds (Chipkin 2016). Declining support in this racialized manner means that the projects of nation-building, non-racialism and social cohesion are threatened. Having to deal with party battles, state failure and lack of international support as previously afforded to it, the African National Congress is in danger of losing its historic hegemony.

Without appearing either totalizing or unduly pessimistic, there is certainly a need for more theorizing on the position and future of Indians in South Africa. A better, intersectional view, peering within the Indian community, as well as higher view of its location within the nation, is required. Bill Freund takes an interesting perspective – Indians he claims, exhibit a mixture of attitudes (Rabe 2003). They view South Africa from a unique position, experiencing it both as outsiders and as insiders (Hull 1996). Freund accounts for Indian attitudes as having a vigour, plasticity and ingenuity of their cultural and material response to their circumstances. Indians, argues Freund, have applied their attitudes to ontologically shape their own spaces, as well as to view the broader world. In line with Freund's insider-outside theory, Amartya Sen postulates a theory of justice that provides a basis of reasoning and human development.

3 Amartya Sen: Capability Theory and Theory of Justice

Sen theorizes that development is a process of expanding the real freedoms of people (Sen 2014). In this approach, the expansion of freedom is viewed as both the primary end and the principle means of development. Sen calls the end and means of freedom as the 'constitutive role' and the 'instrumental role' of freedom in development. The constitutive role of freedom relates to the importance of the substantive freedom in enriching human life. The substantive freedoms include elementary capabilities like being able to avoid starvation, undernourishment, escapable morbidity and premature mortality, as well as the freedoms that are associated with being literate and numerate, enjoying political participation and uncensored speech and so on.

The instrumental role of freedom concerns the way different kinds of rights, opportunities, and entitlements contribute to the expansion of human freedom in general, and thus to promoting development. The following types of instrumental freedoms must exist in order to promote development, namely, political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security (Khasnabish 2013).

In the theory of justice, Sen is concerned with how will-power is set against the structural condition of a society (Sen 2008). Based on what the migrant, diaspora or minority choose as value – 'reason to value' – they have will-power and choice that are part determinants of capability. Sen's theory of capability offers to migrants, diaspora and minorities the idea of strength, in the face of unequal power relations, as well as due to the lack of resources, migrants and minorities succeed through a paradigm of choices. Sen's theory of justice offers what he calls conglomerate theory, i.e. having both practical value as well as promoting transcendence (ibid.). Herein lies the intrinsic and extrinsic value of Sen's theories of capability and justice, which come to the liberation of migrants, diaspora and minorities.

4 Intersectionality and Indenture

Indian indenture can benefit from intersectionality as method (of analysis), as well as by application to investigate the cross-cutting dynamics of Indian indenture. Intersectional studies can serve as an academic frame and instrument to intervene in a world etched with fault lines of inequalities. There is a need to foreground some aspects of social dynamics and relations, where these have previously received undue emphasis, to the point that they constitute the starting point of inquiry (Cho et al. 2013). Intersectionality zeroes in on some issues that have occupied privileged places.

Intersectionality presents the study of indenture with opportunities to breach old school, single-dimensional notion of Indian indenture. Indian indenture cannot be confined to the time of its official disbandment. Indenture has resulted in new societies, overlapping identities, complex social relations, multiple diasporas, literacy criticism and cultural connotations. Associated with these new developments are new forms of experiences, place in society and human rights.

Intersectionality in research focuses on uncovering processes of differentiation and systems of inequality across a range of issues, including gender

rights, colonization, religion, immigration, and political behaviour (Al-Faham *et al.* 2019). Intersectionality opens new opportunities for renewal and partnership building in social movements and grassroots organizations. Intersectionality has been central to the study of inequality, identity and power relations in recent history (Rodriguez et al. 2016), making it a compelling instrument for the pursuit of indenture studies.

Accordingly, using an intersectional lens, this chapter is able to comment confidently on a wide of issues relating to Indian indenture, including a cosmopolitan perspective of Indian identity, diasporas in history, engendered indenture in literature and finally, Indian diasporic pursuits in South Africa.

5 Cosmopolitan Indian Identity

Being Indian can mean different things to different people and to Indians themselves. The cosmopolitan view is all-embracing of all humans belonging to one community, irrespective of social or political boundaries (Padmanabhan 2012). By extension, religion, common sense and science contributed to one human family with numerous nations, tribes and branches (Aravamudan 2011). Cosmopolitism may be understood as the moral and political extensiveness of people, organizations and institutions (Delanty 2012). To be cosmopolitan means to be open, rather than closed. The idea and preference are inclusivity, with an emphasis on it representing an alternative to the status quo. Accordingly, cosmopolitism is sometimes considered idealistic and even elitist. Notwithstanding such criticism, hegemonic perspectives are obligated to consider the difference of the other from one's own immediate perspective. Clearly there is an obligation to address social injustice and those challenges that separate some groups from the mainstream.

The cosmopolitan argument accounts for 'unity on diversity' which framed cultural thinking pre- and post-independent India (Aravamudan 2011). Unity in diversity is also an influencing principle in current social, political and cultural discourse outside of post-independent India, where so-called people of Indian origin (PIO) are located. This principle survives in discourse to this day in the places around the world where Indian indenture was imposed by Empire.

Secularly minded leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, framed state policy on the principle of unity in diversity (Gottlob 2007). Historical experience was grounded in the coexistence of different cultures and ethnic groups over many centuries. The other was always part of a politically united

India, resulting in a common India. In embracing a common India, Nehru was known for referring to India as a tolerant society, even encouraging different racial and ethnic groups. Of course, Nehru's conception of Indianness and India did not always find common ground.

Indian society was and is far more dynamic and complex culturally. One way is to view it in continuum, episodically being overpowered by waves of occupations. The term 'palimpsest' is probably best placed to make sense of India as a country that withstood several periods of imposed alternative cultures, yet still remaining true to its original purity. Original purity is used here in the typical sense without definition or content. Rather, purity is compared to an umbrella in the case of Dumont (in (Mickevičienė 2003). The umbrella is the shelter for all things, not accentuating the definition or content of a thing, but on the interplay of relations of purity and impurity. Hence a thing may be less pure (rather than outright impure) or, for that matter, less good (rather than outright evil). The argument here is compelling. According to Dumont (ibid.), the opposites of pure and impure construct the caste system – manifested by hierarchy, separation and division of labour, which gives them (i.e. the manifestations of the caste system) their *raison d'être*. Each of the manifestations of caste preserves the purity of the purer ones from the polluting effects of the impure. Thus, the whole is founded upon the opposing effects of pure and impure. Nevertheless, how the caste system operates in reality does not end here. Pure and impure states are both permanent and impermanent. Regulated by a system of rules, a transgression of the caste system (say untouchability) is fixed by the power of ritual, thereby regaining the state of purity. Dumont and other supporters are not without critics. In the final analysis, the caste system has been found to be routinely contradictory, undemocratic, and a barrier to development.

6 Diasporas in History

Cohen (Chotard 1999) describes diasporas as communities with shared identities such as language, religion, custom or folklore that have settled outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, and that maintain some sort of loyalty and emotional links with the old country. The earliest use of the term diaspora applied to Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersions. Historically, the term represented the archetypical politico-religious experiences of Jews recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Having experienced famine and defeat under several

regimes, Jews took refuge in Egypt. Shelter, hospitality and prosperity[3] under the regime inevitably morphed into enslavement due to fears of Jewish eclectic capabilities and growing numbers. The ecclesiastical liberator of the Jews was Moses[4], unschooled in the ideology of slavery, had to be ordained with special powers enabling him to convince the Jews of the day to emancipate themselves not only from physical servitude, but primarily from the state of mental and spiritual servitude.

The term 'diaspora' was increasingly used in the literature to connote groups that lived at distances from their ancestral homelands, more popularly known as countries of origin. Writing on the journal *Diaspora*, the editor observes that the term 'diaspora', that described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersions, is now ascribed to immigrant, expatriate, guest worker, persons and communities in exile, overseas community and ethnic community (Kadekar *et al.* 2009).

According to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration [IOM], in 2020, there were 281 million migrants world-wide; making up 3,6% of the global population; of which 164 million are migrant workers; with remittances amounting to USD 702 billion transferred globally by migrants and diaspora in 2020 (Migration 2022). Internationally, no universally accepted definition for 'migrant' exists. Accordingly, the umbrella term 'migrant' in lay terms means a person who moves away from his or her place of residence, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes categories of people, both legal (migrant workers, international students) and illegal (smuggled migrants).

Diaspora as academic discourse is understood as forced dispersal, immigration, displacement and transnational communities (Agnew 2005). An important pre-occupation of people of the diaspora is memory. Indentureship in South Africa, as can be assumed in other parts of the world, are storehouses of colonial oppression, gender discrimination, unhygienic working and living conditions, trauma and of course conflicts, rebellion and resistance. Memory among the descendants of immigrants is a memory of suffering, endurance,

[3] Through the generosity of Joseph, once a slave, clothed in a multi-coloured coat, rose within the administrative ranks of the Pharaohs.

[4] The prophet Moses was traditionally credited with writing the Torah and with leading Jews out of slavery from Egypt and across the Red Sea to the Promised Land.

struggle and survival – the stuff of subaltern experience.

Memory of indenture appear poignantly in post-colonial literature in Africa, India and elsewhere. Within the 'detritus of indenture' the terms '*girmit*'[5] (agreement) and the term '*girmitiyas*'[6][7] used by Mishra (Mishra 2007, Kishore 2010), captured as the so-called *girmit* ideology came to not only representing indenture, but also the subaltern experience characterized by the ethos of tyranny. So too the term '*kala pani*'[8] appears in formal speech and in literature, a reminder of the role of the oceans in history. Then there is '*jahaji bhai/behn*'[9] (Mukherjee 2011) and '*jahaji*-hood'[10] (Pirbhai 2010), vocabularies of Caribbean origins. The former spells the relations of brotherhood and sisterhood experienced on the ships, and the latter of the relations in the plantations. Sometimes these relations are forced to recount the memory of the perilous journey over the *kala pani*.

The innocence and beauty of the surface and the depths of the oceans have been vulgarized by colonial narrative, imperialism, slavery and of course, indenture. The oceans functioned as the repository of the dead, a natural convenience swallowing the evidences of inhuman, suffocating conditions and atrocities on the ships. Death during ocean crossings was an expensive cost for colonial agents of indenture and sugar plantation owners. For the dead, no relatives or known members of a community mourned them. The only memory of the dead were recordings in shipping logs.

7 Engendered Indenture in Literature

Diaspora research indicate multiple characteristics; secondary outcomes; benefits and deficits to countries of destination and origin. On the one hand, migrants adapt to new societies, and on the hand, they appear to maintain links,

[5] The term was applied in Fijian sugar plantations.

[6] The term was used in the South African sugar plantations.

[7] Popularized by Gandhi in South African. The term also appeared in the title the work: *The Girmitiya Saga – Gandhi's South African Sojourn*, by Giriraj Kishore, Niyogi Books and Konark International. (2012).

[8] Black water, i.e. ocean.

[9] Ship brothers/sisters.

[10] Expressing indenture's bondage and shared experiences, cultural affinity and spiritual fraternity.

i.e. material, relational and cultural links, as well as imagined links. Imagined and/or mental links are crucial diasporic characteristics, to the extent that diasporas come to constitute invisible nations residing outside of their countries of origin (Beine et al. 2011). The mental links come into play in the discussion of people of indenture in South Africa, with particular reference to religion, language, identity, gender and civil life.

Govinden and others reveal through their writings that (the South African) Indian identity, however problematic its singular designation, is constructed against the 'detritus of indenture' (Govinden 2009). In 'celebration' or 'commemoration' of Indian indenture, Govinden (in (Stiebel 2011) examines local works of Indian fiction entering the post-apartheid literary world, yet also claiming the space of plantation literature. Examples include Neelan Govender's *Girrmit Tales* (Govender 2008a) Rubendra Govender's *Sugar Cane Boy* (Govender 2008b), and Aziz Hassim's *Revenge of Kali* (Hassim 2011), among others.

South African Indian women have been literarily engaging in a 'refusal of amnesia' by dealing with the apartheid past in a 'personal way' (Govinden 2000). Among these Indian women writers are Jayapraga Reddy, Agnes Sam, Farida Karodia, Zuleikha Mayat, Fayiza Khan, Dr Goonam, Phyllis Naidoo and Fatima Meer. The writings of Ansuyah Singh and Muthal Naidoo are also significant literary milestones. The writings not only concern local discursive issues; they resonate with neo-colonial domination, racial oppression, dispossession and cultural fragmentation, finding and defining 'home', crises of identity, and living with differences.

Hiralal argues against the traditions of the historiography school where Indian women were portrayed one-dimensionally as oppressed, chattel and did reap any betterment to their lives (Hiralal 2014). Other impressions, belonging to the neo-slavery school, characterized women as merely victims of an oppressive labour system. This being true, but according to Hiralal, these portrayals are limited. New evidence on indentured labour in Natal demonstrates the multiple challenges men and women endured on board the ships, the conditions under which they laboured and how some women challenged their employers and spouses against ill-treatment. Yet, even these accounts focus on individual acts of resistance, which were limited to absenteeism to suicide. According to Hiralal, little or no attention is paid to women engaging in violent acts of resistance, such as arson, poisoning and murder. The indentured system did indeed empower women with aspects of

economic and social freedom, as well as the opportunity to transgress traditional gender roles.

8 Challenges of the Diaspora

While many may look upon the topic 'Indians in South Africa' as though the reference were to a homogenous group arriving in South Africa as a homologous cohort, a deeper look will reveal that there were those of Indian origin who arrived in South Africa well before the celebrated 1860 indentured workers arrived. A significant number were captured slaves that were brought into the country in 1654. There were also the 1860 indentured workers and, among others, so-called 'passenger Indians' (or free Indians) who arrived from 1860 onwards. The latter were traders, artisans, teachers, and shop assistants.

After the *Natal Coolie Law, Law No. 14 of 1859* (Du Bois 2012) had been passed, the law made it possible for the Natal Colony to introduce Indians as indentured labour, with labourers having the option to return to India at the end of the five-year period. In the case of the latter, a free passage would be provided back to India. The indenture contract also provided for the labourers to re-indenture for a further five-year period, which entitled them to settle permanently in Natal. Upon completion of their indenture, they were also entitled to a gift of crown land and full citizenship rights. However, the last set of rights was later withdrawn in order to discourage the settlement of Indians. The system of indenture was contractual, but workers often found themselves on the receiving end of slave-like treatment on the plantations, which did not have communications links with colonial administrators; lacked a system of oversight of plantation operations; and extreme powerlessness left workers, both men and women, to the mercy of plantation owners and its system of authority.

Indentured women from India were understood to be from wanting backgrounds. Many were abandoned by partners and families under the putrid conditions of poverty and impositions of colonization. Many were widowed or destitute sex workers attempting to escape a prolonged life of despair and desperation. Empire had no intention of women indentured labour, since they did not encourage the prospect of permeance of the indentured system, nor the idea of reproduction of the workforce. Unfortunately for Empire, the Government of India had developed a set of rule and regulations intended to safe-guard and regulate the exportation of Indian labour. Accordingly, for every one hundred men, forty had to be women.

Many historians argued that indentured labour was a replacement for slavery which was ended in Britain in 1833. Joshi (in (Govinden 2008) argues that it was a substitute for slavery and forced labour. '… they were half-slaves, bound over body and soul by one hundred and one inhuman regulations' (ibid.). Herewith was another of Empire's cruel experiments (based on the prevailing theory of race) – the imposition of boundedness after boundedness on men and women, on this occasion from India, who were presented as a different subject for social engineering. It *may* have been that Empire was inflicting a brutal test on a people that Empire knew were descendants of an ancient civilization, bearing a highly sophisticated culture and scientific knowledge systems not matched elsewhere in the world. The outcomes of this vulgarity are evident in continuum and still in the making today. The outcomes show that no matter how much a people of civilization and sophistication were robbed of their essence, in time, the buried qualities re-emerged to transcend even the *Weltanschauung* of most modern societies hosting the diasporas.

On the other side of indenture, i.e. 'passenger Indians' (or free Indians) with resources who came to South Africa hoping for prospects promised by colonial agents and other business opportunities, also experienced resistance and found themselves on the receiving end from two communities, namely white settlers and local Africans. White settlers were threatened by competition in the markets posed by the free Indians, while Africans, prompted by the wedge driven by the settler state to encourage separation, felt that Indians would elbow them out of their own country (Hughes 2007)!

The experiences of women members of free Indians contrasts sharply with indentured women in terms of indentureship and class. Indentured women were thoughtlessly denuded, physically punished, sexually abused and did not share the privacy and practices of human dignity. Women of passenger Indians experienced challenges of tradition, religion, caste and gender hierarchies even before they could migrate. Women travelling unaccompanied by a family member of male escort on a ship was unthinkable. Very few women accompanied men partners or as members of a family due mainly to gender role differentiations and concerns for migration expenses and living in affordable new settings. Women of passenger Indians did not receive much attention until historians and literary critics documented the histographies of 'well-to-do' families post-migration (Hiralal 2016). Within the growing body of work, women no longer become an adjunct to men in migration histories, but independent categories of analysis.

9 Consolidating Post-indenture Community Life

9.1 The Indian Working Class

In the book, *Insiders and outsiders*, Bill Freund answers the research question: How and why did Durban become the city that it is (Freund 1995)? Freund focuses on the Indian working class as a particular analytical challenge at coming to grips with the question. Despite suffering discrimination and heavily burdened by poverty, in contrast to the African population, Indians did not face the same barriers post-indenture (1911). Indian labour was mobile, did not have to carry a pass[11] and, crucially, could join trade unions. These 'freedoms' or 'privileges' translated into unrestricted participation in the labour market. Under such circumstances, and supported by early capitalism, Indian labour not only benefited Durban as a city, but the local service, manufacturing and agricultural sectors.

Freund's study of the economic history of Indians in Durban, consolidates a stunning conclusion:

- not the state or capital, i.e. city officials or entrepreneurs, nor some external force provided the content for the Indian working class;
- memories of racial exclusion and discrimination morphed the branching off from the working class, a new generation of Indian radicals that occupied decisive spaces in political and intellectual life; and
- given the remarkable ethnic dichotomy, working class Indians constructed and separated a distinctive perspective from the ambiguities and constrictions of the time.

Freund's only conclusion is that the Indian working class have ontologically responded with a mixture of attitudes – 'they look out to South African society from a unique position, experiencing it both as outsiders and as insiders' (Freund 1995). Freund's study is an excellent example towards explaining many of the challenges faced by the Indian diaspora in South Africa. In particular, the social concepts of accommodation, integration, cohesion are also understood from the discipline of economic history, thereby supporting diaspora studies from the perspective of intersectionality.

[11] The Pass Laws was a system used to control the movement of Black, Indian and Coloured people in South Africa.

9.2 Cooperation Post-indenture

The Indian working class is credited in economic history, to the point of producing today's business leaders, entrepreneurs, political leaders, intellectuals and religious philosophers who occupy the public space. What of the community and the personal? Is the outsider-insider complex sufficient explanation for achievements of the Indian working class? What does it mean to lead the life of an Indian? These questions lie at the periphery of identity, class and ethnicity. They can be thought of as politically constructed, socially constructed, or as imagined. Given the issue of space and relevance, this analysis will be skipped. In its place, an analysis of cooperation will be featured. Cooperation during post-indenture hinges on two influences: that of Indian society and the Indian family system. Indian society is collectivistic and is thought of as promoting social cohesion and interdependence (Chadda and Deb 2013). The traditional Indian joint family system follows more or less similar principles of collectivism, translating to social capital.

Many Indian political instruments have been fashioned alongside the idea of collectivism. For example, the Cooperative Movement began with the enactment of the *Cooperative Credit Societies Act 10 04 1904* (Verma 2004). The Indian government is committed to cooperative development, which has inherent advantages in tackling the problems of poverty alleviation, food security and employment generation. Cooperatives also fill in the space at delivering goods and services in areas where both the state and the private sector have failed. Cooperation is also institutionalized at the local level of Indian society, vis-à-vis the *panchayat* system. The Panchayati Raj[12] functions as the system of local governance in which gram panchayats[13] are the basic units of local administration.

It is therefore not difficult to extrapolate the idea of cooperation in the collective Indian psyche. Given Indian history and the consensus of how to govern the world's largest democracy, the principles of panchayat, i.e. direct participation has also extended to the necessity of self-help and social ethics. The Indian psyche is not only organized around the rational notion of the practice of cooperation, but is framed in ancient texts, philosophies, sciences and traditions.

[12] Panchayati Raj is a form of government at the village level where each village is responsible for its own activities.
[13] Village council.

The Vedas[14], for example, has influenced the Indian society deeply. Of course, the Vedas are contested, manipulated and sometimes misunderstood. In this version of the Vedas, (a) the world is in constant flux (Saṃsāra); (b) there is no substantial meaning in it; (c) this world is, in the final analysis, an illusion; and (d) the best course for humans is the state of Vairagya, a turning away from the world (John and BPh 2018). While the mythology may appear negative and pessimistic by nature, the alternative truth to life (so to speak) is far grander, noble and celestial. However, in practical terms, the effect of the mythology has enabled the people to think freely, given the varieties of schools of subject fields and schools of philosophy.

The survival of people of indenture was heavily reliant on cooperation and coexistence. There is evidence from diaspora studies that compromise and cooperation are the very heart of the developmental process. This is true of all social structures, i.e. in both integrated and divided alike (Premdas 1996). Accordingly, framed on the logic of cooperation, the cultural, religious and educational achievements of post-indenture can be understood.

9.3 Culture, Religion and Education

Indian culture in the diasporas did not sit well with colonizers and Empire. Indian customs of marriage, purdah, officiality of priests and so on were as a matter of fact not recognized as traditional law or tolerated in practice. European hegemonic order vis-à-vis the colonial state and the missionary movement was to imposed on every ethnic group, cultural identity and traditional practice. The ultimate intention was to rid colonial people of their identities, cultures and diversities. Social engineering, removal of indigenous children from their parents and traditional families were routinely subjected to re-education at residential schools. More brutal treatment of first nation peoples included dispossession of their lands, forcible life in the reservations, or the most extreme measure – extermination. South Africa experienced such unthinkable episodes. Cape San societies, who were only hunter gatherers in disposition, were the first peoples of the Western Cape region who had undergone unconscionable violent subjugation of a genocidal nature (Adhikari 2010). This feature, that is, where both indentured workers and local societies coexisted and came under the same oppressive regime, had the effect of extending and deepening suffering and

[14] Collection of Sanskrit hymns, 2nd millennium BC.

memory of sufferings. The aim was simply to replace thinking human beings with unthinking bodies compliant solely to the iron will and giddy fancies of colonial masters.

Julius Nyerere remarked that ultimately development is about what goes on in the head of the citizen for it is under one's hat that there exists the greatest underdeveloped part of the world (Nyerere 1973). Nyerere's observation of the role of individual psychology in development concurs with the World Bank's World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society and Behaviour (Bank 2014). The World Development Report 2015 focuses on decision-making and behaviour of individuals at making better choices regarding economic development. Accordingly, the report advances specific interventions that target the psychological domain.

Both Nyerere and the World Bank appear to presage the capacity of Indian diasporas to make good social choices. Both observations appear to be based on the framework of a thinking and highly discriminative[15] culture. Such being the case, the Indian diaspora in South Africa must be credited for transferring, maintaining and promoting significant aspects of Indian culture in South Africa. In every geography of Indian presence, based on language and religious traditions, Indians have integrated into the local cultural matrix their symbols, artefacts and practices. Certain cultural practitioners and activists have successfully integrated Indian and local cultures, including dance, celebrations and religious observances. Respective Indian High Commissioners in Durban have maintained cultural and international relations with local traditional leaders and clans. For Cohen (in (Vertovec 2004), religion cements and binds the 'diasporic consciousness'. However, some diasporas adopting religions like Judaism, Sikhism, Bahais, Rastafarianism, including to some extent Hinduism, tend to sacralise their respective homelands. Notwithstanding the anomalies in the relationship between diasporas and religions, they tend to implicate one another.

South Africa is richly distributed with multiple Indian religious organizations that provide religious programmes and religious-backed institutional facilities such as educational colleges, non-governmental organizations, health and welfare centres, food programmes, employment creation projects, and so on. Some religious bodies are specialized in building primary and high schools

[15] The recognition and understanding of the difference between one thing and another (discrimination between right and wrong).

in rural areas, usually neglected by government. Crucially these programmes perform socially useful work, as well as build social cohesion. There are also admirable Indian religious bodies that perform emergency work during conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies in the African continent and in parts of the world that are usually not knowledgeable to ordinary publics.

Formal education in west societies developed in the 19th century recognizing the need to provide basic education for children consisting of basic proficiency in reading, writing, math, and algebra, as well as some work skills. Anthropologists suggest that all societies educate, train, and mentor their children. This also applied to Indian indentured workers and the Indian diaspora. In the absence of formal schools, the Indian diaspora in South Africa, undertook independently to socialize their children into the norms and expectations of their parents. Children were required to learn language, skills, and values.

Unfortunately, the role of schooling and education in development of the Indian diaspora has not been properly studied in South Africa, thereby making it impossible to establish an empirical causal relationship between the two variables. However, some evidence from Indian sociolinguistics indicate that people of indenture possessed knowledge in the form of traditional folk tales, proverbs, riddles and songs (Mesthrie 2018), prompting the genesis of education pursuits among children of the diaspora. There is also anecdotal evidence of learned priests who were literate in religious traditions, who sparked ideas of education of children. Early communities thereby organized language schools teaching Tamil, Hindi and Urdu at community-built temples and Mosques.

The transition from these language schools to formal primary schooling has unfortunately not been deserving of formal study. Rather, what is known is the existence of community-based schools, initiated by trust and material support of peoples of the diaspora. Given that both the colonial and apartheid states did not fully concern themselves with education provision for indigenous and diasporic people, evidence of historical continuity is difficult to ascertain. However, what is known once again from anecdotal evidence is that the apartheid state came to be convinced to share the provision of schooling with communities, at least where community schools were in existence. Pursuant to the attitude of self-help, the organization established by Gandhi in 1894, the Natal Indian Congress, helped to establish health, child and family welfare bodies and an educational programme known as the Congress School.

From the foregoing it is understandable why Indians were apparently

known for their thrift, investing their savings in small businesses and in the education of their children as such. The operative word is investment, i.e. education was an economic concept, the expectation of value in the future, not limited to the individual, but in the form of distributive generational wealth gains. Generational wealth formation is an important economic concept in today's developmental discourse.

9.4 Indian Political Participation, Ethnic Conflict, and the Circle of Exclusion

The participation of Indians in the anti-apartheid struggle, followed by formal politics are historical milestones writ large in South African history. The political *raison d'être* of Indians was to be found in the opposing ideologies of colonization and apartheid discrimination to the promise of a new democratic system that upheld a non-racial society that recognized and respected the equality and dignity of all people. Indians believed and hoped for true integration into society that ensured their political, economic, social and cultural status and identity as equal citizens, where race is de-institutionalized for any purpose, including administration, public policy and laws of the land.

During the political negotiations of 1991 and subsequently, known as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), the African National Congress, which received the popular support of a large section of Indians, did not manage to win key ideological positions – among them, non-racialism. Instead, the concept of multiculturalism and a multicultural society was proposed in order to garner unity among the major political and splinter political entities. Even the notion of a united black or African coalition was not possible due to contestations of blackness and Africanness. Indians also shared divided allegiances within the black and African political discourses. Indians were further divided outside of the African National Congress, sharing support for the National and Democratic Parties.

Ethnic conflict between Indians and indigenous Africans are rooted in indenture history. Two major riots occurred subsequently; the first in 1949, after which the state concluded that the riots were 'unexpected' and 'unforeseen' (Webster 1974). The second occurred in 1985, which occurred within the context of severe political resistance in the former Transvaal and the Cape, followed by state-sponsored political assassinations in Durban. Inanda (an African township) and Phoenix (an Indian Township) are geographically

situated opposite each other. This specific event was construed solely as a racialized confrontation between Africans and Indians (Hughes 1987). African-Indian tensions have been fuelled further by anti-Indian rhetoric and rioting Durban in July 2021. Rather than improvements in race relations after 1994, events like the 1949 1985 and 2021 riots and remain an African-Indian antithesis (Thiara 1999). It is clear that a multicultural society that does not address the material conditions that fuel racial and class antagonisms, such as that apparently between African-Indian will not succeed as a democratic political system positioned in the present neo-liberal context. The net effect on Indians will be to arrive full circle from the exclusionary dictates of indenture, and suffer the politics of exclusion ejected from the majority who are not understanding of class relations and the counterforces of corrupt politics.

10 Conclusion

The chapter celebrates Indian indenture in South Africa. Indentured people found themselves in different troubles, yet transcended them. The diaspora of today is known as transnationalism – an interesting concept for developed economies, who need to regulate trans-migration. Crucially transnationalism is thought of as globalization from the bottom, having implications for economic development, and social and cultural integration. This development puts out an important question for the future – what would the leading countries of the world of tomorrow look like and what about the future of democracy?

Indian indenture was a labour solution for Empire, yet Empire treated people of indenture brutally and unconscionably. They saw indentured workers as a problem to be exploited and ultimately eliminated. Indian indenture germinated new race relations in the previous Natal and now in the current KwaZulu-Natal. The race divide is manifested in the history of riots in Durban and ongoing crises of public-sector service delivery demonstrations, endemic poverty and deep, pervasive unemployment. African-Indian race relations can easily deteriorate to crisis levels in the face of the failing state. The politics of posturing and blaming are useless rancour, unworthy of the memory and dignity of outstanding revolutionaries whose hard winning of democracy is disrobed.

A major concern of the chapter was the incompleteness of theory explaining surviving and transcending indenture. The stock of literary knowledge on gender in indenture outstripped theory as well. Indenture gave way to diasporas, and diasporas to transnationality. These developments, which

are associated with globalization must also be theorized in the South African and African contexts. Despite these theory setbacks, Sen's capability theories of capability and justice accounted for agency and development. Sen's theories may also strengthen the conceptual understanding of transnationalism and globalization. Freund's methodology and economic analysis of Indian indenture was most useful at understanding development of the City of Durban. The analysis has broader implications for other economic sectors, including the state sector. The chapter also made crucial reference to cooperation as a theoretical device for development. Perhaps cooperation may be extended across to the perilous area of African-Indian relations in the Durban area.

Indian indenture is well known for self-help approaches, promoting of education, welfare interventions and the general spirit of humanity. Altruism, empathy and extending charity are inherent characteristics of Indian communities. Religion appears as the platform of social action and social consciousness. Accordingly, absorbing blame, not unlike the aphorism – 'take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also' – appears to characterize the attitude of these communities.

The discussion on culture, religion and education sets out the contributions of indentured and diasporic Indian people over time and within the limits of their development. Their achievements provided the foundations for future and the current generations. Had they not imagined the economic dimensions of education in the way they did, future and current generations would have been poorer. The political dimensions of the diaspora require careful thought towards improved African-Indian relations and fuller political participation, lest Indians re-arrive at the point of a new form of exclusion. On a different, but related subject, there is a great potential for diasporic transnational engagement as part of a global project.

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