

Editorial: 21st Century Geo-political Discourses on India's Diaspora: Global Perspectives

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Diaspora studies endeavours to understand and describe transnational experiences of migration within an inter-disciplinary perspective among fields as diverse as literature and cultural studies, economics, anthropology, and sociology. Scholarly studies of migrations, as is present in diaspora criticism, are not, and cannot be, a system of ordered and forced rules or critical regulations. The fluctuating nature of the material, and the constantly changing quality of international evidence and private awareness, mean there cannot be and should not be any single, coherently determined method of diaspora inquiry. This means that diaspora studies, is, by its very nature, quite diverse, theoretically, as well as methodologically. As such, diaspora criticism is by its historic, literary, media and legal nature a delta of interrelated critical streams that flow out from the multiple impressions, experiences, sufferings and memories of displaced persons, willing migrants and emigrants, and often, desperate refugees. From within the Indian diaspora legacy in particular, there is a wide array and multiplicity of documented empirical experiences, literary representations, and critical scholarly analyses, interpretations and reflections available in a plethora of published materials such as books and academic journals. The first part of this journal issue of *Alternation* makes an addition to this constantly growing corpus of materials, especially from a number of South African perspectives.

The journal begins with an article by Rajendra Chetty that focuses on British imperialist rulers who aimed to prove the ethnic pre-eminence of their race. In response, indentured labourers arriving in Natal as part of the Indian diaspora established and developed their own ethical standpoint. By analysing historical and literary data, it is possible to trace the emergence of a critical identity and ethical consciousness which were shaped by the experiences of the

South African Indian diaspora community in South Africa. The nature of this identity is historically significant and adds to the variable identities and ethical value systems of the country as a whole. Chetty also argues, that, in itself, this identity and the values it fosters, are also of considerable value in nurturing critical literacy and socialist consciousness for countering current social challenges related to various manifestations of racism and materialist indifference.

Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, in their research, critically analyse the relationship between South African President Zuma and his family, and arguably the country's richest Indian family, the Gupta family. This relationship has made persistent headlines throughout 2016 and 2017. The family, who arrived in South Africa from India in 1993, are accused of being involved in the removal and appointment of Government Ministers as well as the Directors of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) such as Transnet, Eskom, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and South African Airways (SAA). This article examines the allegedly improper relationship between the Zumas and Guptas. The analysis of this relationship also allows the probing of key socio-political issues more than two decades after South Africa's independence. Some of the issues are the place of Indians in the South African political economy, corruption, Black Economic Empowerment, White Monopoly Capital, and the role of Indian capital in Africa.

This is followed by Bobby Luthra Sinha's article that analyses the nature of the Diaspora policy present in India's foreign policy and how it articulates with international relations. From being distantly neutral and adopting diplomatic routes of concern for Indian origin people abroad during its early post-Independence outlook, India's Diaspora policies have turned volte-face by shifting to the foreground of its global profiling in more recent times. Three important agents responsible for this role reversal are represented by the forces of globalisation, transnational geopolitics and Diasporization, acting in tandem with each other. Referring to these three as the, 'International Triad', she employs this term and these concepts as heuristic tools in her analyses and interpretation. She shows that Indian Diasporas have come a long way, emerging as not only key drivers in development efforts but also in strengthening bilateral ties between host and home nations as other diasporas do. Her two main questions in this regard are: how do members of various Indian Diasporas assess the 'everyday' of this diaspora – home nation relationship, and, conversely, how responsive and compassionate is India to

the qualitative expectations of its Diaspora?

Nirmala Gopal and Bonita Marimuthu's paper explores how South African Indians, as a diverse diaspora community, construct their identity. Their paper employs a qualitative methodology and research design, and examine the perceptions of three generations of South African Indians on identity construction. Participant responses are captured qualitatively with some responses represented graphically. Findings, although not generalizable, concludes with the voices of respondents showing clearly a hybrid identity model that informs South African Indian identity. Data for this paper was produced from 21 face to face interviews with three generations of South African Indians in the Metropolitan Area of Durban.

Fathima Mukkaddam's research shows society's focus on marriage in most if not all communities. This is manifested in social media, television, almost every movie, novels, children's story books, conversations and the internet in forms of online articles and blogs, which emphasize a pressure on women to get married or have a companion. This paper discusses the institution of marriage and the societal pressures surrounding matrimony amongst members of the Muslim Indian community in Johannesburg. In this article, she shows how marriage is regarded as a necessary condition, especially for a Muslim Indian woman's constructive and participatory role/ identity in society. The significance of marriage can be seen to be embedded within Islamic practices. However, this dogmatic view of marriage does not explain the pressures placed on individuals to get married. Islam advocates for fate and trust in God, therefore it can be argued these pressures are socially constructed as opposed to religiously inflicted. This article uses feminist methodological tools and theoretical perspectives in an attempt to debunk the role of patriarchy in the socio-cultural construction of the institution of marriage in modern society. The article is set as a case study which included semi-structured interviews. It concludes that unmarried women feel 'judged' and 'scrutinized' because of their marital status.

Rajendra Chetty and Kasturi Beharie-Leak's article examine Fatima Meer's memoir, *Prison Diary: One Hundred and Thirteen Days, 1976* (2001), and the short story 'Train to Hyderabad' (Meer 2010). Theoretically, they analyse the symbolisation of women's isolation under male scrutiny, male rage at female autonomy, and the compulsion to gag female critique of male government, whether domestic, provincial or national. Behind the historical fact of colonial pseudo-slavery, termed indenture, which was not gender-

specific, lies the surviving, wide-spread and less-recognised phenomenon of female subjugation which may be termed female indenture. This reading of 'Train to Hyderabad' re-enacts a liberatory process: freeing the text in a way which reflects Meer's own scripting of her work in a pattern of self-denial and socialist concern for the oppressed, about her.

Susan Chand's piece discusses how India had influenced the community life of people of Indian origin in Trinidad and Tobago long before diplomatic relations commenced between the two nations in 1948. The paper historically examines India's influence on the construction of community life and bilateral relations between India and Trinidad & Tobago during and post-Indian indentureship, spanning over 170 years. The paper draws from the written accounts by historians, government officials and scholars on the policies applied to the indentureship system, abolition, and bilateral relations between the two nations. Interviews of prominent persons from the East Indian community are integrated to provide contemporary perspectives on outreach strategies launched by the Indian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago. The successes and challenges of the outreach activities in a multi-ethnic milieu like Trinidad and Tobago are also examined. The major findings indicate that cultural frames were employed by the indentured laborers to re-create India from their memories and were integrated into their community life. Policies during indentureship pushed them to develop close communal ties with all within the Indian community. Policies and resolutions to abolish indentureship underwent a long process. Current outreach strategies by the Indian High Commission are vibrant and inclusive of all ethnic groups.

In her article, Pragna Rugunanan focusses on migration which she argues has traditionally been seen as a primarily a male domain, particularly in developing countries. However, global practices have increased the visibility of women migrants such that the feminisation and irregularisation of migration has led to new flows of transnational migrant movements particularly to South Africa. This article further draws attention to the growth of south-south migration, specifically focusing on Indian migrant women, as accompanying their professional spouses migrating to South Africa. Set within a social cohesion framework, the paper examines how the women attempt to find a 'fit' in a socially diverse society where distrust, exclusion and racism still prevail. The paper is based on exploratory research using qualitative interviews conducted with married Indian women. The paper examines the reasons for their migration, their choice to migrate specifically to South Africa,

perceptions of South Africa, their sense of inclusion, and estimates to what degree they have developed a sense of belonging to the country. Preliminary findings show that the migrants find South Africans very tolerant, but keep to themselves, and that the fear of crime, amongst others, impedes integration.

Bettina Pahlen and Lindy Stiebel's article emerges from joint research by scholars in South Africa and Germany on a literary trail devised in 2006 by the research project KwaZulu-Natal Literary Tourism. This urban trail, set in a historically Indian-occupied area of Durban, highlights writers who lived in and wrote about the related area. Coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the Grey Street Writers' Trail in 2015, the literary trail was the focus of an MA dissertation by Bettina Pahlen on the relationship between the literature trail and ongoing urban renewal activity in the quarter.

Kalpna Hiralal's work focuses on women who have been at the forefront of global nationalist movements. In Latin America, Asia and Africa colonialism and its subjugation of men and women inevitably led to the rise of nationalistic fervour. In both South Africa and India women were at the forefront of the struggle against colonialism and later, apartheid, challenging gender roles and creating new spaces for their political activism. This article examines the role of women in the nationalist struggle in South Africa and India within a comparative perspective. She argues that women's political participation in different geographical settings were shaped and defined by class, gender, religion, ethnicity and race. Hence women's experiences within global nationalistic struggles cannot be homogenised but must be viewed through multiple lenses. This article contributes to narratives on gender and nationalism and how regional and continental histories shape and define women's participation.

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