"The Struggle to be South African": Cultural Politics in Durban, Contesting Indian Identity in the Public Sphere.

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Summary

South Africa officially emerged from apartheid in 1994. Almost a decade later we are still confronting the persisting legacies of apartheid. One of them is the separate spaces that were designed to foster delineated ethnic and racial identities. In the past, enforced separation encouraged the perpetuation of different cultural spheres. Now spaces have been made more permeable, but the 'officially' sanctioned identities still persist. At state level, the discourses of 'non-racialism' and 'Rainbow Nation' are dominant, but at the local level, the old categories of Indian, Coloured, White and Black are often aggressively asserted. It is suggested that, although apartheid has ended, there exists in contemporary South Africa a heightened sense of ethnic identification. Indians in contemporary South Africa grapple with questions of their identity, their 'place' in the new South Africa, and (like other minority groups) express anxiety about being part of the majority of South African society. This disssertation examines a broadly defined Indian cultural sphere in Durban, in particular a public sphere related to media and religion, where old Indian identities retain currency and, at the same time, new articulations of identity are constantly being made. The role of public discourses in shaping such identities is examined in detail using data collected through interviews with Indian cultural leaders and media communications between 1999 and 2001. An interrogation of discourses prevalent in the public sphere exposes the inherent contradictions and complexities of attempts to (re)create such "essentialised" identities. This paper demonstrates that Indian-ness is a highly contested and hybrid identification.

Preface

This entire thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own work, and has not been submitted in part, or in whole, to any other University.

The research work was carried out in Durban under the supervision of Dr S. Brooks and Dr D. Scott.

Acknowledgements

It has *definitely* been a journey.

To my dad although you are not with me, and my mum, this is dedicated to you for all the sacrifices you made for my growth and progress.

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To my husband, Allen thanks for enduring my endless delays, mood swings and making me realise that at times all I needed to do was relax.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Finding a "Place" in the "Rainbow Nation"

"… ethnic and racial identities cannot be attributed solely to the state's social engineering … and their resilience in new forms poses enormous challenges to the emergence of a broader South African national identity."

(Mail and Guardian, 6 June 1997)

"Why are we so afraid of admitting our racism/s? Media coverage of racism often extends only to sensational killings or attacks or the media defending against itself against being racist. There is little space for open, honest debate on race, and when there is, where are the voices of ordinary people?"

(Mail and Guardian, 21 June 2002)

"… It is time we engaged in a national debate about, race, about stereotypes and misconceptions, about cross-pollination, about language and racial discord … It's sort of like therapy."

(Vasantha Angamuthu, *Daily News*, 17 Sept 1999)

1.1   Introduction

The social categories of race have occupied a contested space in South African social and political history, and in post-apartheid South Africa the issue of identity is intensely debated in the public and private spheres. Race and class remain crucial categories to make sense of the identity constructions of South Africans.

During apartheid there were at least two broad responses to the state imposition of racial identity from within the liberation movement. Both sought to resist state-imposed and racially classified identities. One response was to redefine victims of apartheid as "black", thus prioritising their political experience as victims of apartheid instead of their racial/ethnic identity. The racial category "black" embraced all those who were victims of apartheid and these included African, Coloured and Indian. Being "black" was valorized in the anti-apartheid struggle, thus inverting the unequal relationship between black and white. The other response was to abandon racial categorization altogether by promoting 'non racialism'. This is closer to the post-apartheid rhetoric of the' rainbow nation', currently dominant in African National Congress government philosophy.

Contestations over (racial) identities have persisted and extended into the democratic era. In the new South Africa racial categorization has been clearly abandoned through legislation and thus institutionally, but the categories of race and ethnicity persist. We have a new slate, but ethnic and racial identities still persist in the psyche of South Africans. While some degree of spatial desegregation has occurred, the old social boundaries still exist.

Recent events in South Africa illustrate the hotly contested nature of this issue. Late in 2002 the Boer Nation Warriors (Boerevolk-Krygers) claimed responsibility for bomb blasts in Soweto and Bronkhorstspruit. According to the press the group sent letters, which carried a black and red logo, to several media organizations and signed them only as the 'Warriors of the Boer Nation'. In the letters the Boer Nation Warriors said the bomb blasts were the 'beginning of the end of the ANC government' and that they marked the end of the oppression of the Boer nation (www.iafrica.com/pls/cms). Other groups may have been less overt in their claiming of a political ethnic identity, but the issue of belonging in South Africa remains a crucial one for "minority" groups.

Figure 1:

Jonathan Shapiro, *Mail and Guardian*, 02/09/2002
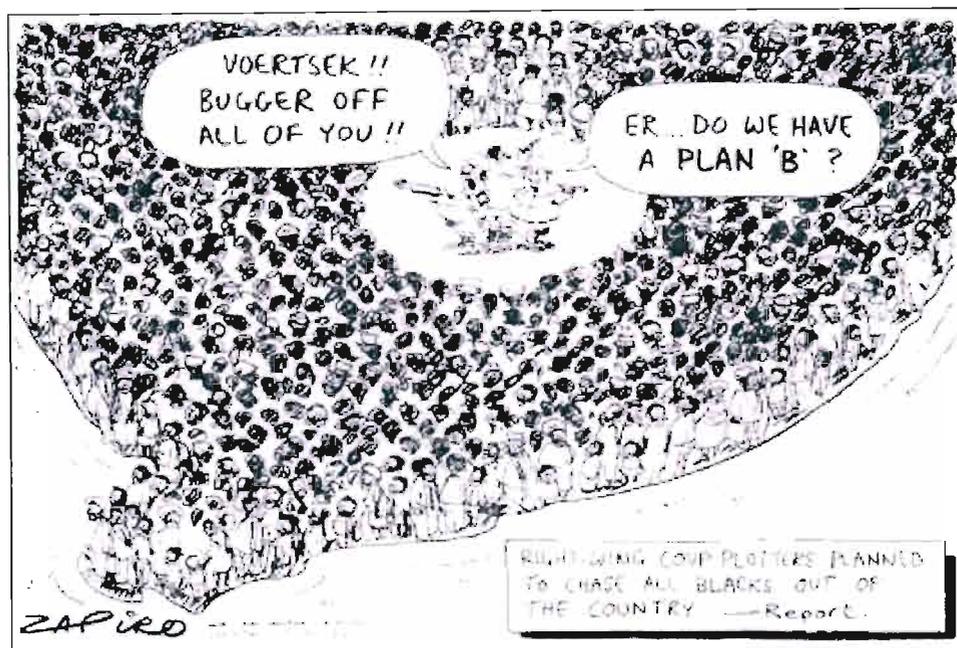
Contextually this thesis is poised at a crucial moment in space and time. It has become commonplace to refer to the April 1994 general elections in South Africa as heralding a new era. Ideally, this moment meant the dismantling of apartheid and the constitution of a "new South Africa", a non-racial utopia. At the same time, and crucially, the final constitution of South Africa made provision for rights to self-determination, including provisions for language and cultural rights. In particular, Principle 34, adopted in February 1994, states that the general principle includes the right to *self-determination of any community sharing a common cultural and language tradition.* Legally this means that all communities in South Africa, as part of their constitutional right, are culturally recognised. The following statement by President Thabo Mbeki to the Afrikanerbond, captures the dilemma:

> 'In our present situation, we are faced with the challenge of ensuring that our different cultures, languages and religions cease to make us islands unto ourselves, but instead enable us to understand the basis of all our people's fears, anxieties, love, hopes and dreams…While we pay tribute to

people's cultures and languages as their own and worthy of the utmost respect and protection, a right which our constitution takes very seriously, in order to enhance these cultures and languages, we must also build bridges that connect one with the other, and thus create the basis for mutual understanding, instead of the walls that for centuries have kept us apart and prevented our full flowering as one people ...

It is clear that our languages and cultures demonstrate our diversity as a people through a celebration of all our interwoven heritage...

[However] the establishment of a democracy in our country through our first election in 1994 and the recent re-affirmation and consolidation of our democratic ideals through our second successful elections has meant the liberation of the entire South African society from the mindset of the apartheid past, its laws, its insidious impositions on the mind, body and soul. More so than ever before we are liberated from the limitations it placed on all our lives. For the first time we are free to contemplate what it means to be South African at the dawn of a new century, what it means to be living in a changing global reality and be able to meet the demands of these times as they unfold before our very eyes and in our lives...

Together we are faced with a challenge of how to consolidate this social movement forward. What is it that we ought to do to ensure that while we preserve our languages and cultures, we also become true South Africans? ...Together, all of us as Africans, must commit ourselves to making the next century an African century and realize the dream of a better life for all.' (Statement by President Thabo Mbeki to the Afrikanerbond, 27 July 1999)

The above statement by the President highlights crucial issues that face South Africans today. In particular minority groups such as Afrikaners and Indians are struggling to find a place in the new South Africa. Mbeki's statement highlights the political ideology of the African National Congress, of the "Rainbow Nation", where each racial group is regarded as part of the mosaic of South African society, separate but equal, contrary to apartheid South Africa where communities were regarded as separate and therefore unequal. He appeals for a new "African" identity to be forged.

In the last few years, the issue of identity has occupied a primary place in debates amongst Indians in South Africa. These debates and contestations played out in

the public sphere of media and through the arguments of cultural "leaders" of
various kinds, provide the primary material for the arguments developed in this
thesis. One striking example was the furor surrounding Mbongeni Ngema's song
'Amandiya', a cultural production which placed the tensions between African and
Indians firmly in the public sphere not only in KwaZulu-Natal but countrywide.
The song alludes to Africans seeing their economic progress in competition with
Indians. It has certainly raised the ire of both black and Indian South Africans
eliciting quite divergent responses. Parallels have been drawn to the Ugandan
situation where economically threatening Indians were expelled by the
government under the leadership of the late Idi Amin. The public domain has
become a crucial arena to understand the contested and highly complex nature of
racial and ethnic identities as well as inter and intra racial groupings in South
Africa.

An analysis undertaken by Markinor at the start of 2003 indicates that Indians, far
more than any other racial group in South Africa, are deeply pessimistic about
their future in South Africa (See Box 1). Their fear is predominantly explained in
terms of economic and political alienation, due to the perceived vulnerability
imposed by affirmative action and black economic empowerment policies. Such
tensions have been made explicit in the public domain. When one peruses the
alarming statistics, clearly 'South African Indians[1] the most gloomy' demands
deeper analysis.

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[1] Utilizing the signifier "South African Indian," in no way attempts to pre-empt the findings of this dissertation. It is merely used as a convenient means to describe Indians in South Africa.

Box 1:

"South Africa's Indians the most gloomy"

(*Mail and Guardian*, 8 January 2003, www.mg.co.za)

South Africa's Indian community is the most fearful about what 2003 holds, suggests a new Markinor survey on attitudes to the year ahead. Markinor, the local affiliate of Gallup International, conducted the survey among 3 500 respondents of all races in October and November last year. It tested South African expectations of 2003, with a particular focus on the economic prospects...

However, a racial breakdown of the responses indicates a wide divergence in perceptions of the future, with Africans often the most optimistic group, followed by coloured people, whites and Indians, in that order.

This may reflect the extent to which different groups feel they have control over their political and economic destinies, and their differing levels of confidence in the government. The survey may, in fact, measure degrees of political alienation. As a small minority, Indians may feel as politically vulnerable as whites, without enjoying the economic cushion available to most white South Africans. Most Indians are workers, not - as commonly supposed - members of a mercantile elite. Answering the question" Do you think 2003

will be better, the same or worse than 2002?" 36.5% of Africans believe that it will be worse, compared with 38.5% of coloured, 43.8% of whites and 46.2% of Indians.

On the economic prospects in 2003, 35.5% of Africans believe it will be a year of economic difficulty compared with 39.6% of coloured, 46.6% of whites and 58.4% of Indians.

A slightly higher proportion of Indians than whites expect a year of prosperity - 14.8% compared with 14.5%. Africans (24.8%) and coloureds (21.6%) are markedly more upbeat.

It is over employment prospects in 2003 that the groups diverge most strongly. On whether unemployment will increase " a lot" over the next 12 months, 37.9% of coloureds believe it will, compared with 40.9% of Africans, 41.8% of whites and – a long way out in front - 59.9% of Indians.

Although the African respondents were most fearful of losing their jobs in 2003 (51.2%), a much higher proportion of Indians (44%) were worried about the possibility of unemployment than coloured people (29.3%) or whites (20.4%).

Another key site in which the issue of race was highlighted was the school environment. Racial integration at schools has led to racial tensions intensifying. Incidents of racism continue to make headline news. In November 2000, Northwood Boys High School pupil Ashveer Gokool shot himself. A note found after his death cited unhappiness and pressure at school as the circumstances that led to his death, and the boy's father claimed racial intolerance and problems at school contributed. In another incident a young Indian girl was not allowed to wear a Black bindhi, a symbol of religious significance, to a Model C school, since it was against the school's rules and regulations (*Tribune Herald*, 6 December 1998). These incidents point to continuing problems of cultural and

racial intolerance in South African society that in many cases appears to have led to South African Indians feeling isolated from mainstream society.

This analysis of the contested nature of Indian South African identities hopes to contribute to the broader debate. It provides the platform to address questions such as; have the meanings attached to the ethnic and racial labels of the 'old' South Africa persisted, or have South Africans developed a new national identity? Discourse analysis of interviews with cultural "leaders", as well as an extensive collection of other primary materials, suggests that the tensions that exist tend to oscillate between these two positions, that is, the desire to belong to a new nation and the desire to retain a separate identity, derived from a history that has been indelibly inscribed by apartheid.

The analysis undertaken in this dissertation through the interview responses and the media analysis suggests that South African Indians are located at different places along a continuum, one pole clinging to an essential, primordial Indian identity, the other to a South African identity abandoning their "Indian-ness". This continuum suggests an implicit geography - the idea of India as an imagined homeland and significant place of origin versus the vision of a united South Africa in which origins do not matter. The analysis will show that Indian identity is a highly complex and often contradictory construction.

The following extract highlights once again, the highly contested nature of Indian identities in Durban. As Marlan Padayachee expresses so poignantly, Indians face an identity crisis in post-apartheid South Africa. In this extract Padayachee engages with crucial issues that have become volatile in the public sphere.

Box 2:

Marlan Padayachee Speaker's Column,

(*The Independent on Saturday*, 27 August 2002, own emphasis added)

'Indians were a community with a *double-layered identity*. They looked to India for their spiritual, religious and cultural succour despite New Delhi's trade and diplomatic embargo on Pretoria. Political icons before us, from Mahatma Gandhi to Monty Naicker and Yusuf Dadoo, embraced the African political struggle while retaining their Indianness...

Ever since Indians arrived in Natal in 1860 as humble peasants, they have resisted racial oppression and exploitation. From Rossburgh to Rivonia, Indians have had a rich history of having walked side by side in the liberation struggle with the Africans.

Should we blame it on *apartheid's propaganda and social engineering system* for having turned Indians into a racist right-wing enclave, reactionaries or mere insulated observers in a nation faced with spiraling post-apartheid crime, poverty, unemployment, homelessness and the spread of HIV-Aids?

Indians have been experiencing an identity crisis. The controversial AmaNdiya song has seriously questioned the allegiance of South Africa's one million Indians to the new order and the plight of the historically disadvantaged and economically marginalized African people.

Whatever their fears Indians should ask themselves: Are we Africans first, Indians second? Are we Indian-African or South African of Indian origin? They will soon find out that the Indian working classes have much in common with the African working class.'

As Padayachee notes, Indians in South Africa have been accused of forming a 'racist right-wing enclave', of being either 'reactionaries' or 'insulated observers' in post-apartheid South Africa. While these labels are pejorative, they do suggest a continuum of responses by South African Indians concerning their identity construction. This thesis identifies in the public sphere both discourses that attempt to recreate an essentialist Indian identity, as well as counter discourses that attempt to break down this essentialism.

A final introductory extract is taken from the Radio Lotus talkshow "Viewpoint" hosted by Dr Ashwin Desai. Desai dedicated an hour to discuss, "What does it mean to be Indian?" and the following is an extract of the programme transcript that highlights the crucial issues that South African Indians grapple with. In introducing the show, Desai spoke explicitly about his perception regarding new identifications with the imagined geography of India:

"...And so tonight we are going to discuss what does it means to be an Indian ... Is there such a thing as Indian culture? Is that an appropriate category for people? What is the basis for people saying 'I am an Indian?' What is behind that saying?... Is there something specific about this community, about our culture, about its people? Or is it just a lot of hot air and that we just use this as a defence mechanism and this category does not exist anymore?

...Within that we then need to raise the issues of resurgence, of people trying to attach themselves to caste and *a resurgence of people starting to attach themselves to the North Indian and the South Indian consciousness*. Now it appears that we have a mixed match here, we have this thing with some people trying to reassert themselves and saying that they are Indians, others saying that they are South Africans, others wanting to be African.

There's this whole thing I keep hearing on the radio and people phone me and say that our job at the [radio] station is to upkeep Indian culture. Now I get increasingly confused about what this means and maybe tonight we can start to get clarity about how that Indian culture fits with increasing polarisation in the community. Where people are extremely rich, and some people even own post offices in the community, while other people don't have enough money to buy a postage stamp... Some people own places that sell cars while some people don't even have money to jump on a bus.

That's the polarisation of the community and is it possible then to talk about something like the Indian, is there something like the Indian? And aren't we being pulled apart with this emphasis on caste and the resurgence of people who have North Indian and South Indian forums, kendras, building temples where certain parts of the community go to ... the divisions that exist. So is there community at all? Because that is important for Lotus FM, its important for everybody. *Because there isn't such a thing as a homogenous Indian community*. That is our response in programmes like this.

What should be our orientation, should our emphasis be in different spheres? So that's Viewpoint tonight. What is the Indian, and is there such [a thing] as Indian culture, and are things like caste and the divisions between the North and the South the way to go to? Or these just things used by ethnic entrepreneurs to sell ideas for religious or political benefit, where people zealously guard their territory and try to build constituencies around them?" (Radio Lotus, 20 July 1999)

Dr Ashwin Desai raises a number of issues that cohere around unpacking the notion of Indian-ness, such as resurgence of Indian-ness, fragmentation,

authenticity and socio-economic factors. Taking his comments as a point of departure for this thesis, it becomes crucial to unpack what it means to be Indian in South Africa in the post-apartheid era and to explore how South African Indians engage in this debate, "...because there isn't such a thing as a homogenous Indian identity".

1.2   Aim

The dissertation looks at a minority group in South Africa, South African Indians and how their identities are being constructed and re-constructed in the public sphere. Indians in contemporary South Africa grapple with questions of their identity, their 'place' in the new South Africa, and (like other minority groups) express anxiety about being part of the majority of South African society.

With increased global interconnections South African Indians have the opportunity to maintain or create links with their land of origin, India. Through air travel, satellite television and the internet there is greater accessibility to India. Recently the Indian government launched an initiative that promised diasporic Indians an opportunity for 'dual citizenship" and this poses interesting challenges for South African Indians[2]. An interesting question that this initiative poses is, would adopting this dual citizenship be interpreted as a sign of non-allegiance to South Africa?

It is within these tensions between the national and the diasporic, the local and the global, that this research is located. It aims to reveal the tensions that the increased global interconnections and legacy of race consciousness in South Africa have created and how South African Indians find their "place" in the new South Africa. The simultaneous processes of maintaining cultural connections with an imagined India, while negotiating a "place" within the "host" culture and political environment of South Africa, are key concerns of this thesis.

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[2] Commentators argue that the "Non Resident Indian" idea is an initiative by the Indian government to lure its economically and politically powerful Indian diaspora of 20 million people to India for its development. Dual citizenship is offered as bait to attract these people "back" to India in order to aid in its development. (www.mggpillai.com)

Is being 'Indian' in Durban a meaningless or meaningful concept? This is a study of struggles over Indian identity in the public sphere during the period from 1999 to the time of writing (although the majority of data was collected in the period 1999 to 2001). It is a study of the way in which cultural mediators, whether politicians, cultural leaders or spokespeople in the media, have attempted to act within the public sphere to shape Indian identities. These cultural mediators or interpreters can be broadly defined as individuals who engage in the public sphere in an attempt to shape Indian identity. All the cultural mediators discussed attempt to shape Indian identity in a particular way, with some adopting a prescriptive ideology and others a facilitative one. All cultural mediators maintain a different imagined Indian community in mind. Some see Indians as forging greater links with India and creating a homogenous Indian identity, while others encourage the development of a South African national identity, abandoning symbolic attachment to India.

The contested nature of Indian identities in post-apartheid, postcolonial South Africa is crucial to nation building in South Africa. As Carrim (1994:19) argued in 1994:

> '…the presence of Indians poses interesting challenges for the tasks of nation building and non-racial, democratic transformation in South Africa. The ways in which and the degree to which Indians are integrated into the post-apartheid society will be a not unimportant measure of how successful a non-racial democracy South Africa has become.'

This thesis thus explores key challenges for nation building in South Africa and is concerned with their implications for the achievement of a truly democratic South Africa.

The aim of this thesis, then, is to examine contestations over Indian identity in the public sphere in post-apartheid South Africa, in particular among the Indian

community in Durban. The study pays special attention to the cultural mediator's role in creating particular imagined communities.[3]

1.3 Objectives

Following from the aim, the three main objectives of the study are as follows:

- *To identify and unpack the main post-apartheid discourses around Indian identity in Durban*

- *To investigate the ways in which these articulations of identity link to particular places, or imagined homelands; and*

- *To investigate the ways in which these contestations and articulations of cultural identity attempt to create "symbolic" or "imagined" communities.*

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter Two provides the theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation. The first section "The New Cultural Geography" locates the study within the discipline of Cultural Geography. The second section "Debating Cultural Identity in the New Cultural Geography" provides a theoretical discussion of identity. The third section "Cultural Identities in a Globalised World", discusses dynamics of cultural identities in an increasingly globalised world. The final section "Creating Imagined Communities: Diasporic Identities", discusses the creation of different imagined communities, concentrating specifically on diasporic communities.

The third chapter, "Background to the Study", places the Indian community in Durban in a historical and contextual framework. The fourth chapter,

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[3] It should be noted that due to the sheer size of the topic and the amount of material available, the study has not attempted to grapple in any systematic way with questions of Muslim or Islamic identity in Durban.

"Methodology", discusses the qualitative tools utilised in the analysis of the study. Specifically, the chapter focuses on discourse analysis, the primary tool utilised for the analysis.

The findings are presented in three chapters, Five, Six and Seven. Chapter Five, "In search of the Authentic Indian: Inventing Indian-ness, Constructions of "Essentialist" Indian Identity". This chapter engages with the responses emanating from the study through a discussion of the discourses emerging from the analysis of the various sources of qualitative data. Chapter Six, "Expressions of Indian-ness: Local and Global Identifications in Post-Apartheid South Africa", discusses the various local and global appeals to imagined communities that cultural leaders are making in the new South Africa. The underlying theme of both the chapters is discourses of an essentialist Indian identity. Chapter Six, "Disrupting the Authentic Indian: Counter-Essentialist and Hybrid Discourses of Indian-ness." This chapter identifies and explores the hybrid discourses of Indian identity in the public sphere.

Chapter Eight is the concluding chapter that draws together and discusses the various themes explored in the analysis chapters.

1.5 Speaking Personally

Shurmer-Smith and Hannam, (1994:1), in the introduction to their book *Worlds of desire, realms of power: A cultural Geography*, make a point of introducing themselves as they believe that objectivity is impossible, particularly when addressing cultural matters. It is thus essential that the readers know who is writing, and whose subjectivity is filtering the information and interpreting as they read. I likewise need to say something about the personal history that brought me to write this dissertation. There are limits and biases built into my position, like any other.

I feel that I was meant to undertake a study of this sort in order to indulge in the clichéd ritual of rediscovering my roots and thus myself. When I first became interested in this study I was not consciously aware of the subconscious motivation driving this desire and my interest in cultural geography. But as the process of gathering of material progressed I wondered why I was so intrigued by this question of identity. Surely it was not simply an adolescent reaction to finding out who I am and my "place" in the world?

Reflecting on my personal experiences since childhood to date, it becomes apparent why I was drawn to explore this topic. Whilst growing up I felt that I was caught at the border of two religions, Christianity and Hinduism as my parents were of different religious faiths. My cultural identities throughout this period were fraught with many difficulties, and contradictions at an unconscious level.

Growing up in South Africa we were exposed to a Christianity that was emptied out of Indian-ness (within my social circle). If we showed any interest in Indian culture it was regarded as pagan[4]. Yet I persisted in challenging the domains of my religious faith, for I thought what does my culture have to do with my religious faith, surely they were separate domains? It was only through this study that I began to realise the psychological impact of the apartheid regime of social engineering and the unique diasporic Indian experience that is constantly being negotiated. This study found that the negotiation of such identities is still ongoing in this (post?)colonial and (post?)apartheid context.

On another discursive terrain the question of being Indian plagued my consciousness for a number of years. What does being Indian actually mean? On a trip to London in 1998, I represented myself as Indian and yet 'others' did not recognise me as such. Their constructions of Indian-ness were based on an Indian

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[4] Only my personal view, as I do not wish to indulge in providing an essentialised view of traditional South African Christianity.

woman, dressed in a traditional Indian garment and speaking an Indian language. But I did not wear traditional Indian garments and I was conversant only in the colonialists' language, English and Afrikaans. So I presented a challenge to the British, I was not the 'exoticised other' as they perceived.

In the same year I went on a family holiday to India, to visit my ancestral home and to rediscover my roots. And like others before me who have undertaken this pilgrimage, I felt extremely disillusioned. (To further complicate matters many "recognised" my family and I as Sri Lankan). Here again I was an 'outsider', the other. It was clear to me that I did not belong to India, but how was it that I felt Indian? [5] How could I possibly claim allegiance to a nation and identify myself as one of its subjects through the cultural signifier "Indian", when India itself did not recognise me as one of its own?

This dissertation then is an attempt, in part, to grapple with the questions of my own identity as my life narrative has been deeply inscribed by such questions. This question of my selfhood/identity is a personal journey, and it is my own positioning that marks my interest in this undertaking. I am also a product of this particular postcolonial, post-apartheid community represented in this study. Therefore these discourses of experience and identity constructions are at least in part an engagement with my own subjectivity. This study has personal as well as academic significance, as it addresses fundamental questions of my own grappling with questions of finding my "place" in the new South Africa.

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[5] I am of course aware of the literature that suggests that this is an imagined construct. See Chapter Two.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

"The old forms of existence have worn out, so to speak,
and the new ones have not yet appeared and people are
prospecting as it were in the desert of new forms."
(Saul Bellow cited in Rutherford, 1990: 9)

2.1 Introduction

The above quotation from Saul Bellow seems especially apposite to this study. At the interface of increasing global interconnections and the unique post-apartheid political and economic transformations, South African Indians are struggling to find their "place" in the new South Africa, *"as it were in the desert of new forms"*. Part of the context is a rise in the reassertion of other ethnicities creating "new social movements" both in South Africa and throughout the world.

In post-apartheid South Africa, "the new South Africa" is the most obvious concept used by people to confront and seek to give some name to the massive political and other changes which have accompanied the transformation. But, just what is *new* in the new South Africa? No longer do people have to grapple with a state-imposed identity, but the terrain of identity still remains highly contested (albeit for different reasons) and this contestation often leads to violent consequences. We appear to be witnessing sometimes virulent ethnic identifications, an extension of the old South Africa. These include: the rise in an Afrikaner nationalism and the demand for a Volkstaat (Grobbelaar 1998); contestations over a Zulu identity in KwaZulu-Natal and its ties to the political arena (Dlamini, 1998; Muthien and Khosa, 1998); the defense of

a White identity in South Africa (Ballard, 2002); questions about coloured identity (Jones, 1998) and (of particular interest here) the assertion of an Indian identity in Durban[6]. Clearly the state-imposed identity perpetuated during apartheid continues to makes its presence felt in the 'free' South Africa.

Many commentators have suggested that we need to confront these old established identities and establish a dialogue with them; if we ignore their existence they will still continue to exist. Claude Ake suggests that "we do violence to the African reality by failing to explore the possibilities of ethnicity, by failing to follow its contours and its rhythm, for that would be part of starting with the way we are instead of discarding it for what we might be" (1993:5). In the case of South Africa, Adam has suggested that "democratic transformation in South Africa rests partially on the skillful management of racial and ethnic perceptions." (Adam, 1994:15) Any attempt at nation building will be fatally flawed if these ethnic variables are not probed. Will it be possible, as Degenaar argues, to find a new focus?

> "If we discussed this notion of a 'nationalist' identity and accept[ed] the idea of democracy instead, it is possible to find a different focus for our loyalty. In a multicultural society loyalty is focused around a constitution that has been collectively arrived at. At the same time the citizens of the country feel a loyalty towards a specific culture, language and religion without making nationalistic demands in that regard." (Degenaar, 1995: 9)

These fundamental questions provide the backdrop for understanding the contestation of Indian identities in Durban. South African Indians are a uniquely diasporic community who came to South Africa to work mainly on the sugar cane plantations and like many other colonial global diasporic Indian communities, they chose not to go back to their home country. In the new South Africa, the Indian racial/ethnic categorization has clearly been abandoned, yet we still have certain meanings and/or identities attached to place. Chatsworth and Phoenix, to name but two residential areas, were previously apartheid group areas for Indians, yet today they continue to

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6 Although it should be noted that this is not to suggest that there is a heightened sense of Indian identity in Durban, but that in my area of study, Durban, there is a heightened sense of ethnic identification.

exist as predominately Indian areas[7]. Therefore ethnic labels and their ties to place still reside in the psyche and reality of racial groups, as is evident amongst South African Indians. The Indian community may not be the largest group in South African society but the contestation of their identity demands urgent examination because how it is dealt with will provide interesting insights into how nation building is achieved.

This chapter will provide the tools to understand how South African Indians in particular negotiate their identity formations when "the old forms of existence have worn out ... and the new ones have not yet appeared." (Saul Bellow cited in Rutherford, 1990: 9). Within this vortex of increasing global interconnections and local assertions of Indian cultural identities, there exists a strategic arena within which the contemporary processes of globalisation and localisation are being (re) negotiated on the terrain of place, culture and identities. This study is about the negotiation of 'new Indian identities' that are emerging in the 'desert of new forms'.

The current chapter outlines the latest scholarly literature on place, culture and identity. The discussion is organized into four main sections. The first focuses on the "The Birth of a New Cultural Geography", locating this study within a disciplinary context. The second section, "Debating Cultural Identity and Place", explores debates about cultural identity within this field. The third focuses on "Cultural Identities in a Globalised World". The final theme explores the geography of diaspora under the heading "Creating Imagined Communities: Diasporic Identities". "Imagined Communities" is term that has been widely utilized in Cultural Studies. In this section it is very broadly suggested that globalisation is in some ways is having a dichotomous effect, that is it is creating new "imagined communities" (also called "symbolic communities" or "new cultural communities"), and in other cases is sustaining older "imagined communities".[8] Diasporic communities are useful in understanding the effects of globalization, as they provide a site of negotiation of national, global and local forces.

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7 The property market indicates that these are areas where Indians still want to live, where there exists a competitive market; not because they are forced to but because they want to. There are cases of Indians moving into formerly white areas, such as Westville, but being unable to celebrate events such as Diwali because there were complaints about noise etc.

8 Stuart Hall (1997) has discussed the creation of new imagined communities facilitated through the Internet.

2.2 The Birth of a "New" Cultural Geography

It is an exciting time to be engaging in discourses around place, culture and identity. The current era of globalisation is throwing up many new possibilities in terms of subject matter and theoretical understanding. Scholars from both the social sciences and humanities are active in this field and Cultural Geography, in particular has been at the centre of these debates around the major socio-spatial changes occurring in the world today (Hall, 1995; Mcdowell, 1997; Pile and Keith, 1997; Massey and Jess, 1997; Livingstone, 1997). An eminent cultural geographer noted that "cultural geography is a scholarly discourse that has shifted from the comfort of placid marginality toward the overheated vortex of ferment and creativity in today's human geography' (Zelinsky, 1996:750 cited in Norton, 2000).

Sayer (2000) argues that the cultural turn in geography was long overdue. There is general agreement amongst commentators that the 'cultural turn' in contemporary geography has resulted in new ways about thinking about culture and geography. Philo (cited in Crouch et al, 2000) suggests that a key moment came in the early 1990s at a conference coordinated by the then Social and Cultural Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers, entitled 'New Words, New Worlds'. This was a sizeable conference that dealt with what culture meant for the discipline of geography and it opened up the debate on issues of "culture", leading to a book, *New Words, New Worlds: Reconceptualising Social and Cultural Geography* (Philo, 1991). Others agree that this initiative was a watershed moment in how geographers understood "culture" and dealt with matters of "culture". Barnett (1999) claims this initiative contributed in many ways to the broader cultural turn in the discipline.

There has been a "cultural turn" within the social sciences as a whole. Significant work on culture is occurring across disciplines and not only in geography. According to Mitchell (2000) this cultural turn has also been coupled with a similarly "spatial turn". Thus the intersection of the spatial and cultural turn led to Cultural Geography

being thrust into the center stage. The theoretical scope of cultural geography has expanded so much so that Mitchell (2000: xiv) states,

> "Cultural Geography - like cultural studies more generally - has rushed off in a million new directions, focusing new theoretical energy on traditional concerns like foodways, folk cultures and the cultural landscape, and developing new research foci on everything from psychotherapy, to critical race studies, to the cultural politics and cultural geography of sexuality and gender. Much of this work is celebratory of "difference" and "resistance", some of it collaborationist with the forces of economic globalisation, some of it consisting of incisive interventions in the structure of social life, but all of it has a new-found interest in "culture".

In recent years, cultural geography has undergone a re-appraisal and this has led to a re-theorised cultural geography, a *"new cultural geography"* (Jackson, 1989; Barnes and Duncan, 1992; Anderson and Gale, 1992). This is due to a more expansive definition of "culture", as reflected in the greater consideration of issues such as 'popular culture and the politics of class', 'gender and sexuality', 'languages of racism', and 'the politics of language' (all chapter titles in Jackson's 1989 *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography*).

The cultural turn that is taking place can also be interpreted as extending the boundaries of interest of cultural geography into the political, economic and social spheres and also lending itself to interesting interdisciplinary debates. Captured quite succinctly in a title by young British scholars, cultural geography is now simply "all over the place" (Shurmer-Smith, 1996).

While the *new* cultural turn has meant a more expansive definition of culture and thus expanding the boundaries of culture into other disciplines, it has also explicitly meant a redefinition of culture, beyond a superorganic notion of culture as "static" to one that embraces its flexible nature.

2.2.1 Beyond a Superorganic Culture

Marvin Mikesell (1978:13) suggested more than a decade and a half ago that it was time for geographers "... to give more thought to how they wish to use the concept

culture." The "cultural turn" in Cultural Geography takes a critical look at the accepted ways of thinking of culture and geography. Traditional cultural geography conceptualised the world as isolated geographies of people and places. Globalisation and postcolonialism have problematised traditional conceptualisations of culture and geography, as they call into question the link between place and culture implicit in traditional geographical approaches. Since then a new conceptualization of culture has emerged. The new conceptualization of culture explicitly denies superorganicism and rather sees culture as socially constructed, flexible and actively maintained by social actors.

The "new cultural geography" begins by repudiating cultural geography's former 'superorganicism'. In 1973 Zelinsky (1973:71) had stated that:

> "A cultural system is not simply a miscellaneous stock-pile of traits. Quite the contrary, its many components are ordered. Moreover, the totality of culture is greater than the simple sum of its parts, so much so that it appears to be a superorganic entity living and changing according to a still obscure set of internal laws. Although individual minds are needed to sustain it, by some remarkable process culture also lives on its own, quite apart from the single person or his volition, as a sort of 'micro-idea', a shared abstraction with a special mode of existence and set of rules."

"Superorganicism" was thus an approach that conceptualised culture as a force that was larger than and to a large degree independent of human will. "Superorganic culture" refers to the ontological assumption that culture is a real force that existed "above' and independent of human will or intention: Zelinsky afforded culture a larger than life status, an almost God-like force. This idea is explored further below.

The Superorganic Approach to Culture
According to this thinking, what makes culture work is a complicated process since culture is theorised as a "thing" that is greater than the sum of its parts. Culture is first "an assemblage of learned behaviour"; second a "structured, traditional set of patterns, a code or template for ideas and acts"; and third a "totality" that "appears to be a superorganic entity living and changing according to a still obscure set of internal laws" (Zelinsky, 1973:71-2).

Zelinsky did attempt to include the impact of human intent on culture (1973:40-41 cited in Mitchell, 2000:30), but he underplayed this aspect:

> "Obviously, a culture cannot exist without bodies and minds to flesh it out … but culture is also something both of and beyond the participating members. Its totality is palpably greater than the sum of its parts, for it is superorganic and supraindividual in nature, an entity with a structure, set of processes, and momentum of its own, though not clearly untouched by historical events and socio-economic conditions."

From this viewpoint, the focus of cultural geography is the study of how culture itself works itself across space and in place. Subcultures can be recognized in the landscape, but we need to understand how they are related to the autonomous, but still changeable, whole of (in Zelinsky's case) American culture[9].

As many commentators have pointed out, the implications are worrying. If "useful, non-stereotypic statements" can be made about "national character' in the way that Zelinsky suggests, then, say, American nationalist attempts to rid America of dissident Muslims are seemingly excused. How can they possibly be part of the culture of America, without surrendering all that is part of their own (separate) traditions? This is echoed in English heritage movements as well, which create exclusivist national demands for a nation that is "English".

Essentially the traditional cultural geography or 'superorganicism' drawing from Zelinsky's discursive terrain, was largely concerned with delimiting a cultural group to an area and describing the relationship between the place and the dominant (and thus exclusivist) culture of its people. Within traditional cultural geography or the so-called 'Landscape School', the world was conceptualized as a mosaic of separate cultures each delineated from each other, as though they existed parallel to each other with none influencing the others. Considerable attention was placed on the landscapes that

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9 Zelinsky's analysis was largely based on the American society and the turbulent times that he observed.

social/cultural/ethnic groups created. The link between place and culture was seen as an impermeable "container" that kept cultural differences in "place".[10]

It is in this light that Rey Chow (1993) poses the ironic question, "Where have all the natives gone?" As is most evident in postcolonial literature, "the natives" never really existed in the first "place" or perhaps ever in "time". Similarly Arjun Appadurai (cited in Morley and Robins, 1995:128) explains that, "natives, people confined to and by the places, to which they belong, groups unsullied by contact with a larger world, have probably never existed." Superorganicism theorized about large unspoilt native cultures but did not reveal that they were only the creation of colonialists to suit their colonizing and proselytizing missions.

In this sense then apartheid was also a superorganic approach that sought to amplify these racial and ethnic differences and through political and institutional arrangements ensured that these differences were kept in "place".

Changing Definitions of Culture

Although "culture" is a critical dimension of globalisation and a core element of cultural geography, it is an elusive and complex idea that is difficult to define (Clifford, 1988; Tomlinson, 1999; Mitchell, 1995, 2000). Williams (2000) identifies two reasons why the debate about culture in the social sciences is so confused. He states that in the social sciences generally, there has been a debate concerning the "realness" of culture because of the former theorization of culture as a "thing" that is capable of explaining other things. Secondly culture has generally been difficult to define as it was seen as separate from economy and politics.

The English social critic Raymond Williams (1976: 87-93) cited in (Mitchell, 2000:15) traced the lineage of the word "culture". Raymond Williams suggested that the term "culture" has evolved over time. The word "culture", Williams (2000) states, derives

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[10] As in geography, within the disciplinary circles of cultural anthropology "a culture" also tended to refer to a separate and individual cultural entity typically associated with a 'tribe' or a 'nation' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992).

from the Latin *cultura* indicating "cultivation or tending." Thus the idea of culture[11] developed first as a way of describing the "tending of natural growth." In this sense culture was seen as the human appropriation of nature. Later the metaphor of tending was extended from plants and animals to the tending of human development. According to Williams, "'Culture' was then extended to describe human development (tending to the mind) and eventually came to signal "an abstract process or the product of such a process' with 'definite class associations': the cultured and the uncultured" (Williams 1983: 88).

This distinction between the "cultured" and "uncultured" was central to the idea of culture in modern Europe for it was used as a means to differentiate and to classify individuals into social classes (Crang, 1988). The higher echelons of society were seen to be "cultured" and refined, as opposed to the lower classes of society who were seen as "uncultured". In this sense then "culture" came to distinguish the cultivated from the unruly as evidenced by the writings of Jane Austen and Joseph Conrad and other colonial authors. In this sense the English civilization was seen as "cultured" and thus "civilized" [12]. By the late nineteenth century in various European traditions the term 'culture' came to used be in three particular ways in various discourses, viz:

> "(i)...a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development ...
> (ii)...a particular way of life whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general...
> (iii)...the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity."
> (Williams, 1983, 91)

In fact the first critical advancement in a reconceptualisation of culture was encapsulated in Raymond Williams's famous dictum "culture is ordinary", which was a reaction to the idea of culture as elite and for the refined classes (Tomlinson, 1999). This reconceptualisation of "culture as ordinary" resulted in an understanding that, say, a Spice Girls album is just as much a cultural text as Beethoven's musical genre. Neither one of

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11 'Culture' is certainly a European idea, as has been shown by Cosgrove (1983) and Williams (1983).

12 In Germany and France during the eighteenth century, variations of "culture" were closely associated with "civilisation" reinforcing the class aspect of the meaning of "culture" (Mitchell, 2000).

these cultural texts was seen as existing on a higher cultural plane than the other, for a hierarchical cultural plane does not exist (in this sense).

2.2.2 "Culture" in the New Cultural Geography

The phrase, "new cultural geography" incorporates a wide range of scholars working from a myriad of perspectives. Cosgrove (1983, 1984 and 1989) points us to the complexity of landscapes and the history of the idea of culture. Jackson (1987a, 1987b, 1989, 1991) calls for a thoroughly political geography that places gender, race and sexuality at its core. Duncan (1990, 1993 and Duncan and Ley, 1993) claims that representations of landscapes are never transparent and it is their inherent texuality that cultural geographers need to take cognizance of.

New cultural geography has shifted substantially from seeing "culture" as static to focusing on the internal workings of culture and thus exposing its intrinsically dynamic nature. The central critique of superorganicism came from James Duncan in the1980s. He argued that cultural geographers adopted superorganic notions of culture and superorganicism which wrongly reified culture as a *thing* rather than a *process*.

Perhaps the two most influential reconceptualisations of culture from cultural geography are James Duncan's (1990) development of "culture as a signifying system" and Peter Jackson's (1989) theorization of "culture as a level or medium".

For Duncan (1990:15-16), culture is a set of signifying systems, of a 'material and practical nature', which can also be seen as texts 'which lend themselves to multiple readings'. Similarly the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973:4-5) espouses a definition of culture that is essentially a semiotic one. He states that:

> "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretative one in search of meaning. It is an explication I am after."

Further he compares the methods of an anthropologist analysing culture to those of a literary critic analysing a text. These tasks include "sorting out the structures of

signification … and determining their social ground and import … Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of constructing a reading of) a manuscript" (1973:4-5).

Clifford like Duncan is suggesting that the analysis of culture should be seen as analyzing a text of which there are multiple readings. Through undertaking such an analysis of culture Geertz (1973:4-5) suggests that "once human behaviour is seen as … symbolic action - action which, like phonation in speech, pigment in painting, line in writing, or sonance in music - the question as to whether culture is patterned conduct or a frame of mind, or even the two somehow mixed together, loses sense."

Duncan suggests that there is a complex politics of reading and interpretation of these texts which themselves can be broken down into various, more local, 'discursive fields'. Culture, then, though material and practical, can be reduced not just too social interaction (alluded to earlier on) but also to the *language* and the *politics of language* which comprise the "larger, widely shared, cultural sphere." The value of this approach to culture, Duncan claims, is that it sees culture as a system "which is present within all other social systems and which manifests all other systems within itself."

Other scholars have taken issue with Duncan's emphasis on language. In Duncan's (1990) formulation it is hard to see, beyond language itself, what culture actually is. In Duncan's formulation culture is language, but, then why a separate concept of "culture"? Mitchell (1995) suggests through a critical analysis of Duncan's formulation, that if "culture" is more than, or different from language, Duncan (1990:17) never directly identifies the constituents of the signifying system that is culture (as opposed to something else), beyond claiming that the landscape is '…one of the critical elements in a cultural system, a text (which) acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored'.

Mitchell (1995) suggests that a similar problem exists with Peter Jackson's formulation of culture. According to Jackson (1989), culture is seen as a level, medium or idiom,

but nowhere in his work is there a theoretical discussion of what exactly constitutes these spheres. Jackson (1989:189) does make it clear that 'culture' in the end is indefinable: "...the stuff of culture ... is elusive, best approached obliquely in terms of the processes through which meanings are constructed, negotiated, and experienced." Geographers he states should concentrate on the cultural "in an adjectival sense" (Jackson, 1989:180).

The definitions of "culture" as claimed by both Duncan and Jackson differ from each other in many respects: for example, Duncan places much more emphasis on theories of discourse than does Jackson. Yet their definitions also share many commonalities, such as understanding "culture" as a sphere or a realm of social life, separable from although still critically related to "economic" and "politics". They both also see "culture" as socially constructed and always contested.

In general, the reconceptualisation of "culture" in the "new cultural geography" has been important for turning attention to processes, politics and interrelationships with other "spheres of life". What is fundamental to this approach is to see that culture is a part of and interacts with social, economic and political life and thus these spheres are not separate from each other. Each realm is crucial to the other, and it is their interaction that produces social life. This interaction of the social, political, economic and cultural realms of social life, producing "culture", is quite succinctly captured by Jackson (1989:ix), who argues that "Culture is a domain, no less than the political and the economic, in which social relations of dominance and subordination are negotiated and resisted, where meanings are not just imposed, but contested." This insight is groundbreaking for reconceptualising "culture" which used to be seen as merely a 'residual variable', once the other factors of social life were accounted for (Crang, 1998).[13]

However Mitchell (2000) cautions that for all these advances, cultural geography still has a tendency to reify "culture" and assign it ontological status. Mitchell (2000) feels

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[13] Geography is still divided into sub-disciplines along these lines: political geography, economic geography, social geography, cultural geography.

that "new" cultural geographers should recognize that there is no such (ontological) thing as culture, but to rather focus their theoretical energy on the material development of the *idea* of culture. Focusing on the development of the idea of "culture" as opposed to understanding culture as a "thing", "realm", "system" or "sphere" allows us to better understand the impossibility of dividing the world into, as Mitchell puts it, "… two neatly opposed realms, a material [realm] on the one hand and a separate sphere of meaning or culture on the other".

The new definition of culture has also drawn attention to the workings of power in the world. This approach also allows us to better understand the "strategies of power" that reinforce those distinctions" (Mitchell, 1995:546). Critical to understand is how the word "culture" participates in "…an ongoing 'hidden discourse', underwriting the legitimacy of those who exercise power in society" (Olwig, 1993:107).

In summary, then, earlier cultural geographers tried to define their object of study as a superorganic "thing". More recently, culture has been seen as a "realm" or "sphere". Critics note that a limitation to both these approaches is their insistence on the ontological status of "culture", that is that it truly exists. Yet like "race", "culture" is a social imposition on the world, an attempt to structure social life. Mitchell's point is a useful one when he states that what is of interest is the historical development of the *idea* of culture that attempts to define and order the world:

> "…The power of "culture" resides in its ability to be used to describe, label, or carve out activities into stable entities, so that they can name an attribute of a people. And this should be terrain that cultural geographers should pursue their interests in. The focus of cultural geographers should be on seeing "culture" as real social processes and material representational practices. Cultural geographers' goal should be of figuring out how the idea of culture becomes socially solidified as a thing, realm or attribute and to focus on "culture's geographies" (Mitchell, 1995: 113 cited Gregory and Ley, 1998).

Three broad understandings of culture can, then, be identified. First, "culture" signifies a "total way of life" of a people, encompassing language, dress, food habits, music, religions, family structures and most importantly "values". Secondly "culture" seems to signify other particular tangible *things* such as works of art, whether a museum

exhibition or even graffiti on a street wall. Mitchell tries to bring these together to create a third, integrated approach to culture:

> "Culture seems to be both a nebulous "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1973) that defines the life of people (or perhaps is constructed out of the lives of people) and a set of productions (like art) that reflect upon, speak to, or attempt to mould that "structure of feeling" through various strategies of representation" (Mitchell, 2000:13).

Peter Wade, the anthropologist, like Mitchell tries to combat dualistic views of culture.[14] Wade identifies two sets of dualisms. The first is that between the material and the symbolic[15] (which echoes Mitchell's understanding of "culture"). The second division is between "culture" as a set of (often commodified) representations, and "culture" as a way of life or as a set of practices. Wade (1999: 449) explains:

> "The two conceptual divisions overlap in the sense that 'culture' as representation is also culture as symbol, both material objects and discourse may be involved, but they act as symbols of the other as a way of life - of the embodied practices, the work that created them. In these practices, the material and the symbolic are indissolubly linked, yet the widespread emergence of "cultures" as objectified representations tempts anthropologists, as well as non-academics, to privilege the symbolic."

Massey and Jess (1995) state that culture refers to the systems of shared meaning which people of the same community, group or nation use to help them interpret and make sense of the world and that these ideas are not free-floating but embedded in the material and social world. In addition the terms also include the meanings produced through social practices, as well as the practices themselves, which are regulated and organized by those shared meanings. Culture, then, can be defined as the order of life in which human beings construct meaning through practices of "symbolic representation" (Tomlinson, 1999). It is important to stress that culture refers to all those mundane practices that directly contribute to people's ongoing 'life-narratives', the stories by which we habitually interpret our existence (Tomlinson, 1999).

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14 As in geography, a critical reconceptualisation of culture is also occurring within the discipline of "Cultural Anthropology".

15 Debates about this material/symbolic dualism have been a feature of the theoretical domain in philosophy, the arts and social sciences for a long time (Wade, 1999)

These debates are crucial to understand for the study at hand. It is important to distinguish between culture as "representation" and culture as a "way of life". It is also important to think about who is doing the representing. For example, if one had to peruse the daily representations of Indians in the advertising media, generally Indian women are portrayed in Indian dress, with dot and as subservient. In public events, we see Indians engaging in traditional Indian dance, and closely tied to religion. Take for instance during the inauguration of the first post-apartheid South African President, Mandela, where Indians were represented as engaged in traditional, stereotypical "cultural" behaviour. Those cultural activities that Indians engage in or are seen to be engaged in, such as classical Indian dance, point to the representational practices that they engage in.

However culture viewed as the everyday life of Indian people in South Africa is different, and includes activities that are in many cases in conflict with such representational practices. Many South African Indians have abandoned the "Indian way of life" as represented on South African television. The vast majority of South African Indian women do not dress in a sari, unless occasionally.

Culture is never a "thing" nor should it be objectified, but rather it is a struggled over set of social relations. In summary then culture can be understood as tangible (that is as a representation of meaning) as well as "symbolic" and interrelated with the political and economic dimensions of society.

2.2.3 Travelling Cultures

Within the discipline of Cultural Studies, James Clifford, a social anthropologist, first focused explicitly on prising culture away from location, through proposing the (interestingly geographical) term "travelling cultures". Clifford (1992, 1997) goes against the grain of traditional anthropology by stating that "culture" is essentially "mobile" and hence the term "travelling cultures".

The process of "dwelling" had been seen as essentially localised and anthropologists' methodological approach was to describe the landscapes that people in local places created. Thus "dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement ... roots always precede routes" (Clifford, 1997:3). However, Clifford (1992) suggests that cultures cannot be understood as having inevitable conceptual ties to location, for meanings are equally generated by people on the "move", in the flows and connections between "cultures".

Clifford is not suggesting that we prioritise routes over roots that are restless nomadic movement over dwelling. Rather he is suggesting that we need to see "roots and routes" as always co-existent in culture. These two elements, he is suggesting, are intrinsic and thus constituent elements of culture.

The following example illustrates what the term "travelling culture" means and subsequent contestations over the term. Christina Turner, an anthropologist who worked with female Japanese women factory workers, questioned Clifford's emphasis on "literal travel" suggested in the term "travelling cultures". Her ethnographic work was on Japanese factory workers, women who have never really travelled, so how could their cultural identities be forged through interactions and travel? Turner suggests that despite their lack of movement, these women's local cultural experience is not really local: "They do watch TV, they do have a local/global sense; they do contradict the anthropologists' typifications; and they don't simply enact a culture". (Turner cited in Clifford, 1997:28) Clifford conceded that the notion of "travelling culture" can "involve forces that pass powerfully through television, radio, tourists, commodities, armies." (Clifford, 1992:28).

Globalisation does promote physical mobility but it also changes localities itself, through increased interconnections. Giddens too (1991 cited in Tomlinson, 1999:187) suggests that people's "phenomenal worlds though situated locally, for the most part are truly global". The idea of "travelling cultures" has important implications for this study of the cultural politics of South African Indians. For the most part, South

African Indians have lived in South Africa for the past 140 years and yet they have maintained a distinctive "Indianness". While many South African Indians have not travelled to India, they are very aware of the happenings in "Bollywood", for the most part. With increased global interconnections, such as satellite television, many South African Indians are now linked with the global Indian diaspora, through for example ZEE TV. So although in most cases this has not involved literal travel, Indian culture is still maintained and in some cases encouraged. through television and the internet.

Castells (1997:128) wants to see these developments as part of new social movements, bringing into being a better world. As he argues, the global perspective of the "new social movements, may prove to be embryonic forms of a wider, more powerful order to social resistance to the repressive aspects of globalisation." These new social movements, whether ethnic or otherwise, and whether "progressive" or not, are proving interesting arenas to understand the effects of globalisation on global/local cultures and communities.

2.2.4 Cultural Geography and Cultural Studies

It is important to note, before moving on, that the current understandings of culture in the new cultural geography, are not only reactions to Zelinsky's tradition of Superorganicism, but also have been inspired by developments in Cultural Studies. Cultural Studies is generally seen as an umbrella term that incorporates a wide range of philosophical and social theoretical ideas including feminism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism and also aspects of Marxism and humanism. Cultural Studies arose as a theoretical advance to understand contemporary culture (During, 1993), when the established disciplines were seen as unable to cope with the changing cultural world.

Cultural Studies stresses the importance of culture as a dynamic and primary force that is not necessarily predictable from political, economic and social forces. However, culture is viewed as deeply political. The point of departure for Cultural Studies is described by John Fiske (1992, cited in Mitchell, 2000) as follows: "... 'Culture' as it

is understood in cultural studies "is neither aesthetic nor humanist in emphasis, but political".

Cultural Studies is also a discipline that takes seriously the linguistic turn embodied in poststructuralism. The latter sees language as a medium for understanding social organization: meaning is not merely reflected through language but *produced* through it. Similarly if culture is understood as language, then meaning is not reflected through culture, but produced through it and constitutive of it. As described, geographers have made important contributions to the field of cultural studies. Perhaps the most important geographical idea is the concept of culture as "maps of meaning" - as the "codes with which meaning is constructed, conveyed and understood." (Jackson, 1989:2).

However, many commentators have expressed concern that issues of the "cultural" have begun to dominate the geographical agenda. Geographers such as Philo (2000) express concern that the hegemony of "culture" in cultural geography is leading to dematerialized and desocialised geography. Mitchell (2000) has attempted to quell the discontent by arguing that the discipline is growing and that the emphasis on "culture" is by no means definitive at this stage.

Disagreements aside, all cultural geographers agree that "culture" is spatial and must be understood as such. Earlier in this chapter I stated that Raymond Williams argued that "culture is ordinary", and it is ordinary because it implicates itself in our daily lives through the interaction with the spaces and places that define our everyday existence. Scholars in both the "new" cultural geography and Cultural Studies understand culture as being constituted through space and as a space and it are to this extent that spatial metaphors have become key to understanding the constitution of culture. Here I am reminded of Dennis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson (1987:99) who argued that culture should be understood as "the medium through which people transform the mundane phenomena of the material world into a world of significant symbols to which they give meaning and attach value". Mitchell (2000) reminds us

that cultural struggle is structured *by* and structured *through* the geographies in which we live.

2.3 Debating Cultural Identity and Place

Traditional Cultural Geography largely focused on isolating cultural groups in a spatial area and describing the landscape that that particular cultural group created. Traditional Anthropology followed much the same approach. The traditional approach to space in the social sciences has been to see the world as for instance "a collection of countries". Within this understanding it is a taken for granted assumption that each country has its own distinctive culture and identity. For example, in India there is a distinctive and unique Indian cultural identity. Within this conceptualisation, space was seen as a "neutral grid" on which cultural differences are simply mapped (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992).

Current cultural geographers posit that cultural identity is created from a place and that places create particular cultural identities. This relationship or dialectic is a core concern for cultural geographers. Landscape in the old sense is not the only focus of study of the new cultural geography, as was the case with a traditional cultural geography approach. The new cultural geography's primary focus is a concern with matters of cultural identity, especially as a group identity can be formed with reference to other groups of people, "a referential identity" - the creation of difference.

The construction, negotiation and debate surrounding the conceptual terrain of "identity" are an area of cultural geography which is commanding increased analytical attention. The ways in which our cultural identities are produced and reproduced is the subject of much theoretical speculation. Cultural geographers seek to understand how a particular group identity may be created or constructed in opposition to the identities of other groups. Attention must be given not only to the ways in which identities are initially imagined and constructed, but also to how those identities are both reinforced and re-invented.

2.3.1 A Crisis of Identity?

> "Just now everybody talks about 'identity'... identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty." (Mercer, 1994:4)

In the postmodern, postcolonial era, we are experiencing a crisis of identity. Castells (1997) states that identity refers to "people's source of meaning and experience" and to "the process of construction of meaning on the basis of [culture]." The question of identity is being vigorously debated in social theory. Essentially the argument is that the old identities which stabilised the world for so long are in decline. This has given rise to new identities and has fragmented the modern individual as a "unified subject". The things that used to define us, such as family, community, nation, school and so on, have now been undermined. Some writers argue that one can only make sense of this "crisis of identity" in the light of contemporary global transformations.

Kevin Robins describes globalisation as involving extraordinary transformation, where the old structures of national states and communities have been broken up and there is an increasing "transnationalisation of economic and cultural life." (Robins, 1997). Globalisation (discussed in greater detail below), and the effects thereof on the cultural landscape, has indeed profoundly affected our lives. Notwithstanding postcolonial theory which has shown how the world was integrated through earlier world processes, the level of integration in the contemporary era is unparalleled.

Recent literature suggests that the identity construction of migrant or diasporic people is central to our understanding of contemporary societies especially since the world has become increasingly "borderless". (Appadurai, 1990; Hall, 1987; Hannerz, 1990). Migrant workers for example problematise the assumed uncomplicated link between place and cultural identity. After all these communities do not belong to these nation states, they occupy the "border". Increasingly new migrants from the "periphery" to the "centre" such as from India or China to say, England, have found that they very often occupy the fringes of society and are often not seen as English. The existence of

such communities in nation states complicates the national identity of the particular country.

Migrant or diasporic peoples' experiences challenge geography as their social relations extend beyond the borders of nation states. Diasporic cultures are characterised by interconnections and networks that most often cut across and transform traditional geographical boundaries. Contemporary theorists argue that diasporic cultures challenge the notion of 'fixed' roots or locatedness, as the negotiation of their identity is characterized by 'routes' across nation-states. Migration is continuing to occur at an accelerated and unprecedented scale, with cultures moving across the world. Yet ethnicity, cultural and national identity is still about the maintenance of social boundaries.

Globalisation also calls into question another dimension of culture, its assumed unchanging character or essential core, whether a national or ethnic identity. Generally we think of culture as "placed", that is South Africa has a South African culture. We think that culture is placed, because we "imagine" it to be so. However for instance in South Africa we have numerous migrants, as well as diasporic communities, such as the Indian community. The Indian community complicates the South African national identity, while our national identity is based on the Rainbow Nation and therefore all ethnic and racial groups are seen as different hues of the rainbow. However our current South African government also subscribes to the African Renaissance that places "Africans" at the centre of cultural policy. The point is that globalisation has complicated the assumed link between place and identity, where very often communities draw their identity from places that they do not actually reside in. Doreen Massey therefore proposes that we abandon the notion of place as a settled and enclosed space with internal coherence and rather see it as a "...meeting place, the location of the intersections of particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections and interrelations, of influences and movements." (Massey, 1995:12).

As noted, national identity and cultural identity are thought to be implicitly drawn from place. It is assumed that cultural, ethnic or national identity is drawn from particular places. The leading cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1995:181) states that "Ethnicity arises wherever shared activities and meaning systems in one place are underpinned by shared kinship and blood-ties, evidence of which can sometimes be 'read' into certain shared physical features and characteristics of a population." Thus:

> "...ethnicity is a form of cultural identity which, though historically constructed like all cultural identities, is so unified on so many levels over such a long period that it is expected as if it were imprinted and transmitted by Nature, outside what we would call Culture or History."

Clearly, then, place functions to fix "culture" and thus cultural identities.

Yet the "unproblematic", "natural" link between place and identity has been broken, or never really existed in the first place. In Britain at the moment there is a growing heritage movement, reclaiming "Englishness". This is in the light of globalisation as well as the influx of migrants into the "centre" from the periphery, a development that problematises "Englishness". Consider for example, the following quote from a white reggae fan from Balsall Hall, Birmingham depicting his surroundings:

> "...there's no such thing as "England" any more ... welcome to India brothers! This is the Caribbean! ... Nigeria! ... There is no England, man. This is what is coming. Balsall Heath is the centre of the melting pot, 'cos all I ever see when I go out is half-Arab, half-Pakistani, half-Jamaican, half-Scottish, half-Irish. I know cos' I am (half Scottish/half Irish) ... who am I? ... Tell me who I belong to? They criticise me, the good old English. Alright, where do I belong? You know I was brought up with blacks, Pakistanis, Africans, Asians, everything you name it ... who do I belong to? ... I'm just a broad person. The earth is mine ... you know we was not born in Jamaica ... we was not born in "England". We were born here, man. It's our right. That's the way I see it. That's the way I deal with it."(Hebdige 1987:158-159, cited in Gupta and Ferguson, 1996:10)

The reggae artist states quite explicitly that he was not born in Jamaica or in England. "England" is in inverted commas, as it suggests that he was not born in England as understood by the English but in an England that is occupied by the "blacks, Pakistanis, Africans, Asians, everything you name it." Through the lyrics he contests

Englishness by showing that England is occupied by people of different nationalities and ethnicities which call into question what Englishness actually is.

Numerous scholars in cultural studies have tried to deconstruct "Englishness" to understand what this actually means. As one example, the notion of tea-drinking as a signifier of Britishness has been discussed among various commentators. Stuart Hall observes that this is the "symbolisation of English identity." (1992:49). But tea, he continues is not simply English:

> "Because they don't grow it in Lancashire, you know. Not a single tea plantation exists within the United Kingdom ... Where does it come from? Ceylon - Sri Lanka, India. That is the outside history that is inside the history of the English. There is no English history without that other history... People like me who came to England in the 1950s (from the West Indies) have been there for centuries; symbolically, we have been there for centuries ... I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children's teeth ... (Hall, 1991: 48-9)

In this passage, the "cup of tea" that generally serves as a signifier of "Englishness" is questioned. This cultural identity that is forged through one of its ritualistic practices, drinking a cup of tea, involves a network of countries that reveals far more of England's history and geography than anything else. If having a "cup of tea" is the English thing to do, then it is ironic that "tea" is not even grown in England. Hall (1995) is making a two important points. Firstly, that the link between place and cultural identity is questioned, when even a simple signifier of culture involves a complex network of countries. Secondly that the myth of cultural identity is exposed: the typical "cup of tea" that has served the English way of life, has become identified with Englishness despite the fact that tea is not even grown there.

2.3.2 Early Theorisations of Cultural Identity

The concept of identity has undergone a paradigmatic shift in recent decades (Sokefield, 1999). Within the discipline of Psychology, identity has been understood as a disposition of basic personality features, acquired during childhood and that once integrated became more or less fixed, creating *selfsameness* in an individual. This was

linked to modernity. As Raymond Williams (1976) notes, the modern individual subject was understood as being "indivisible', that is an entity unified within itself which cannot be further divided; thus "singular, distinctive and unique".

In Anthropology, the concept "identity" was mostly used in the context of "ethnic identity". Here this selfsameness, was extended to selfsameness with others within a group that is they shared a similar language, religion and thus a common identity. A leading anthropologist, Erik H. Eriksen (1980:109) stated that "the term "identity" expresses ... a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential characteristics with the other". (Sokefield, 1999).

However, Stuart Hall (www.scuchico.edu/~pkittle/101/hall.html) argues that this did not reflect the real fragmentation of modernity. The modern age, Stuart states, gave rise to a new form of *individualism.* In pre-modern times individuals were conceptualised differently. The transformations which ushered in modernity tore the individual free from his/her stable moorings in traditions and structures. Basically cultural identities continue to be fragmented in late modernity (the second half of the twentieth century till now).

The fundamental changes that make up the postmodern era have contributed to a different conceptualisation of cultural identity, one that is "fragmented". This has led to the final decentring of the Cartesian subject. Theorists have argued that the Enlightenment "subject' with its fixed and stable identity has been de-centred to create the open, contradictory, unfinished, fragmented identities of the postmodern subject. [16]

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[16] Stuart Hall (1992) attributes this change in conceptualising cultural identity to five great advances in social theory and human sciences.: (1) Marxism, which argued that individuals make history only under the determined historical conditions; (2) Freud's discovery of the unconscious, which renders the idea of individuals as rational subjects problematic.; (3) Structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's argument that we are not in any sense absolute 'authors' of the statements we make or of the meanings we express in language: language is a social, not an individual system and therefore we cannot be its authors, (4) French philosopher Michel Foucault's insight that through "disciplinary regimes" of modern administrative power, the individual becomes more isolated and this has led to the greater individuation of the individual; and (5) Feminism, which stated that the "personal is political", thus creating a conceptual space to politically contest all arenas of social life, for example the family.

2.3.3 Essentialist versus Non-Essentialist Constructions of Identity

As Jones and Moss (1995) note, theorising identity became one of the dominant academic concerns of the 1990s. The recent proliferation of academic identity writing has been driven by a critique of approaches that Potter and Wetherell (1987) label the "traditional images of the self". These traditional approaches see identity as "essential", "natural", "reified", "singular", "hermetically sealed", "universal" and "Cartesian". Approaches that respond critically to these conventional ways of seeing identity, understand it rather to be "non-essential", "discursively constructed", "contingent", "fluid", "hybrid", "multiple", "decentred", "fragmented", "subjective" and "post-Cartesian".

As noted, the basis of the shift from essentialism to non-essentialism, is the critical reaction to the realist treatment of identity as a reified, stable property of individuals that can be understood as the product of an objective structure of some kind. Essentialist approaches assume that:

> "...the self is an entity and, like any other entity or natural physical object, it can be described definitively, once and for all. In other words, it is assumed that the self has one true nature or set of characteristics waiting to be discovered and once discovered a description of these characteristics will follow. (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 95)

Such a conception has little purchase in the new cultural geography.

There are two important distinctions that one needs to bear in mind regarding the discursive terrain of identity in general and particularly "cultural identity". Firstly "identity" is relational. For example, Indian identity relies for its existence on something outside itself, namely another identity (perhaps African, White, Coloured) which it is not - which both differs from Indian identity and yet provides the conditions for it to exist. Indian identity is marked by what it is not. This emerged clearly in the research, for example in the advertisement for a local Indian radio station (Lotus), "where everything is not just black and white".

This marking of difference through appeal to some kind of essentialist identity, is not unproblematic (Woodward, 1997). On the one hand the assertion of difference between Indians and Africans, for instance, involves a denial of any similarities between the two groups. Indians generally deny the charge that they are claiming any kind of advantage or superiority in opposition to "Africans". Yet all of the latter are lumped together under the umbrella of African ethnic identity, which constructs Africans as alien and "other". Difference is underpinned by exclusion, that is if you are Indian, then you cannot be African and vice versa. On the other hand this claim of difference is also problematic for Indians. If you are Indian and are defined by your religious faith, say Hinduism, then how do these claims of difference respond to Africans adopting the Hindu religion? Does conversion to Hinduism then imply that Africans become Indians? [17]

According to Diane Fuss, essentialism:

> "is …commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity … The opposition is a helpful one in that it reminds us that a complex system of cultural, social, psychical, and historical difference, and not a set of pre-existent human essences, position and constitute the subject. However, the binary articulation of essentialism and difference can also be restrictive, even obfuscating, in that it allows us to ignore or deny the differences within essentialism" (1989: xi-xx).

In a postcolonial, post-apartheid context, we find essentialism in the reduction of identity to an "essentialist" idea of what it means to be African/Indian/White/Coloured. An essentialist definition of "Indian" identity then, would suggest that there is one clear, authentic set of characteristics, which all Indians share and which does not alter across time. This is a major theme of Chapter Five where I explore the way in which Indian cultural commentators construct an essentialist Indian identity in Durban, for what purpose, and also try to expose the contradictions within and between essentialist discourses.

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[17] Identity is also marked out through symbols. There is an association between the identity of the person and the things a person uses. For instance the sari, a traditional Indian dress functions as an important (but problematic) signifier of difference and thus Indian identity.

Nationalist and liberationist movements often "write back" and reduce the "colonisers" to an essence. By doing so the colonised simultaneously defines themselves in terms of an authentic essence, and thus denies or inverts the values the coloniser has imposed on them. Such a tactic is similar to the movement of Negritude, which sought to valorise the African and thus all values attached to that particular signification, and to invert all the negative characteristics that the colonisers imposed on Africans. [18]

Salman Rushdie (1991:67) interestingly describes essentialism as "the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogenous and unbroken tradition." Rushdie is clearly right to point out that the potential exists for the coloniser *and* colonised to be locked into the binary. However, other writers have attempted to retrieve some value from the assertion of an essentialist identity.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, insists that some subversive, empowering force can come from the employment of essentialist strategies, what she calls "strategic essentialism". The notion of "strategic essentialism" is a useful analytical tool in the study at hand. Spivak (1987:268) describes it as follows:

> "Every path I/i take is edged with thorns. On the one hand, I play into the Saviour's hands by concentrating on authenticity, for my attention is numbed by it and diverted from other important issues; on the other hand, i do feel the necessity to return to my so-called roots, since they are the fount of my strength, the guiding arrow to which i constantly refer before heading for a new direction."

What Spivak has stated is dense and requires unpacking for the study at hand. She states that she consciously adopts an "authentic identity" that the coloniser has created unknowingly. Quite clearly, in South African history Indians have portrayed an essential authentic stereotypical Indian identity at particular moments. An example was the moment mentioned in the introduction, when Indian dance was performed at Mandela's inauguration ceremony to represent Indians as one of the hues of the

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18 Many theorists argue that Thabo Mbeki's "African Renaissance" is in some ways an attempt to "write back" valorising the African continent and thus Africans.

Rainbow Nation. Indians have claimed an essentialist Indian identity, a return to their perceived "roots" in the face of adversity or loss of values. Although Spivak does not clarify what the return to "roots" is for her, it is perhaps the core of (one of) the collective selves that she belongs to.

It is more difficult than at first appears to assert a "non-essentialist" identity. As Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (1996), the editors of the The Spivak Reader, noted, "...one cannot simply assert, 'I will be anti-essentialist' and make that stick, for one cannot not be an essentialist to some degree." A non-essentialist definition of identity is inversely related to an essentialist definition of an identity and thus they are dependent on each other. Broadly, though, a non-essentialist definition of Indian identity would focus on the differences as well as common and shared characteristics both between Indians and Africans and other ethnic groups. It would also pay attention to how what it means to be "Indian" has changed across time and spaces.

Both approaches afford primacy to "identity" - but are this identity really fixed? Does the assertion of identity necessarily involve laying claim to some essential quality, either through establishing that this is inherent in the person or through revealing its authentic source in history? Are there alternatives to the binary opposition of essentialist versus non-essentialist perspectives on identity and difference? This question leads us to a discussion on difference and the 'other'.

2.3.4 Difference and the "Other"

> "The construction of identity...involves the construction of opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their difference from 'us'. Each age and society re-creates its 'others'. Far from a static thing, then, identity, of self or of "other" is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies." (Said, 1994: 332)

Edward Said was an exemplary postcolonial critic whose work in Orientalism showed how the "west" constructed the eastern "other" in their literary texts. These

representations of the "other" aided in the consolidation of colonial power, for it created difference through posing a dichotomy between the "west "and the "other".

There are numerous other postcolonial cultural geographers and theorists who show how colonial discourse serves to create the "other" and thus legitimise colonialism (Hall, 1990, Paul Gilroy, 1993, Sibley, 1995, Kevin Robins, 1999). Two examples are used here to illustrate the process of creating a cultural "other". Firstly Anderson (1991) in a detailed investigation of Vancouver's Chinatown uses a "social constructionist"/non-essentialist approach to identify the manner in which the dominant White settler community "racialised" and defined the Chinese community as different. The latter definition became concretised in space and became known as "Chinatown".[19]

Contrastingly, "whiteness" was not considered an ethnicity and is still not generally considered as such (hooks, 1992, Bonnett, 1996). Instead Whiteness is seen as a benchmark or "norm" to which all other identities are compared and generally subordinated. Anderson's (1991:27) work attempted to show how this external definition continued, albeit through the "positive" discourse of multiculturalism, into the late twentieth century. As she argued, "Multiculturalism rhetoric supports popular beliefs about 'difference' between groups of settlers and strengthens the exclusionary concept of a mainstream society to which 'others' contribute."

A second example is the work of Margaret Walton-Roberts (1998) that shows how Sikh identity is constructed in British Columbia. Through examining the signifier of the Sikh turban, she shows how particular Sikh identities are essentialised. The difference between Walton-Roberts' (1998:313) analysis and that of Anderson, is that Walton-Roberts argues that though a 'social constructionist" approach is useful in identifying the naturalised discourses of race, it is ultimately inadequate:

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19 In terms of this study, a similar relationship between race and space can also be exemplified in the landscape of Durban. For instance because of the dominance of Indian shops in the Grey Street area, this area became known as the Indian part of Durban, notwithstanding apartheid policies that served to concretise race in space.

"...social constructionism can act as a double-edged sword since it is important to understand how categories homogenise individuals, erasing differences but it is also important not to discard the potential unity homogenous groupings can offer and the potential instruments of change that can stem from such alliances."

Walton-Roberts suggest that the use of a "tempered" social constructionist approach is a way to interrogate "natural" categorisations. This she argues will allow one to resist the nihilism inherent in deconstructionist approaches, while at the same time recognising the benefits attained from certain forms of collective identification. Thus in her case study, the turban serves as a symbol of fragmentation and discrimination as well as one of strength for the Sikh community, who use it to oppose negative racialising discourses.

What Walton-Roberts are suggesting is important for the study at hand. The analysis will show that in respect of the South African Indian community, the creation of a cohesive community is done for particular reasons, in a "strategically essentialist" move. The data analysis identifies the essentialist constructions of Indianness that are appropriated by South African Indians for strategic essentialist gain. By doing so it adopts a "tempered" social constructionist approach, interrogating these "natural" racial/ethnic categorizations, while at the same time exposing the reasons for their collective adoption.

2.3.5 Key Points about Identity

Before we move on, it is worth summarising a few key points about identity that need to be considered in a thesis such as this. These points, listed below, are based on Woodward (1997).

- Identity often involves *essentialist* claims about belonging, whereby it is seen as fixed and thus unchanging. In some cases these essentialist claims to identity are based in nature, for example in "race" and "kinship" in some

versions of ethnicity. Often these claims are based on an essentialist version of the past, which is constructed as an unchanging truth.

- Identity is relational, and difference is marked by *symbolic marking* in relation to others. Symbolic marking is how we make sense of social relations and practices, for example regarding who is excluded or included. In the case of Indian South Africans, particular social practices such as perhaps religious festivals will mark who is included and excluded in this ethnic/national group. For instance amongst South African Indians the sari is a signifier of Indianness. Does an African woman using a sari make her an Indian? In addition the Hindu religion is also an important signifier of Indianness. If an African embraces the Hinduism does that make him/her Indian? These classifications are 'lived out' through the symbolic marking of social relations.

- Identity is also maintained through *social and material* conditions. As explained in Chapter 5, South African Indians on one discursive terrain see themselves as materially "excluded" through affirmation action policies, Black Economic Empowerment and the "African Renaissance."

- The conceptualisation of identity involves looking at classificatory systems by which social relations are organised and divided, for example into two opposing groups Indian and African, an "us" and a "them". In the process some differences may be obscured, for example the assertion of an ethnic identity may omit class and gender differences. In this study for instance ethnic identity takes preference in terms of analysis: of course this does not capture the totality of life amongst South African Indians since gender and class differences still exist.

- Identities are not unified. There may be contradictions within them which have to be negotiated. For instance Indians are generally seen as a homogenous group but they are internally differentiated along class, linguistic and other

lines. For example, Hindi-speaking and Tamil-speaking Indians see themselves as fundamentally different, however in certain instances they share commonalities as Indians. There may be mismatches between the collective and the individual level, such as those that can arise between the collective demands of Indian cultural identity and the individual day to day experiences of shared cultures, such as between Tamils and Hindus.

- The psychic level is also important as to why individuals invest in particular identities. Together with the symbolic and the social, the psychic level is also a dimension that we need in order to fully understand how a particular identity comes to be conceptualised and embraced (which is not explored in this dissertation).

2.4 Cultural Identities in a Globalised World

As noted already, globalisation has complicated the relationship between culture and identity in the contemporary world. The leading social theorist Manual Castells (1989) argues that *the* key feature of globalisation is the informational city. This network of global cities bound together through electronic communication creates a new social form that is a "network society". The world has become increasingly connected and a progressively global space and this has paradoxically led to both the creation of new spaces for the expression of distinct cultures and also to the homogenisation of cultures. Migration, which is as much a historical phenomenon as a current one, has led to communities becoming deterritorialised and homeless in this global space. The central dynamic at play is that between localisation and globalisation, as cultural identities oscillate between fundamentalist and globalised identities.

This section considers theoretical perspectives on these new global spaces and identities. It will look briefly at:
- Globalisation and Culture
- Deterritorialisation
- The Localisation/Globalisation Dynamic

- Ethnoscapes

2.4.1 Globalisation and Culture

The global arena is bringing about fundamental changes to the South African cultural landscape. In a nutshell globalisation results in the tendency of the world to "shrink", making events that occur throughout the world easily accessible in time and place, facilitated by increased satellite communications and the Internet. Tomlinson (1999) sees globalisation as a "complex connectivity", which he refers to as the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections between spaces and places. McGrew (1992) also stresses the multiplicity of linkages that globalisation implies: "Nowadays, goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, crime, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs all readily flow across territorial boundaries" (1992, 65-66)

Quite clearly, globalisation is resulting in increased connectivity in the world, drawing distant spaces and places into a global space/s. Tomlinson (1999) argues that these linkages occur in a number of different modalities. A pertinent example is the recent war in Iraq, where we could actually witness the American attack and the devastation that followed. Arjun Appadurai states that theorists across academic disciplines have long been aware that the world has been involved in large-scale interactions for many years, but the interactions that occur today occur at a new order and intensity (Appadurai, 1990). These historical global interactions have been well documented in postcolonial literature.

Massey (1993, cited in Bird et al) points to the use of terms and phrases in the relevant literature that describe this epoch, such as "speed-up", "global village", overcoming spatial barriers and rendering the world "borderless". David Harvey (1989) in his seminal text, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, refers to this era of postmodernity as being characterised by "time-space compression" and Antony Giddens (1990) speaks of 'time-space distanciation'. Appadurai (1990) suggests a world constituted by 'intersecting scapes' (his idea of the "ethnoscape" is discussed in detail below). All

these cultural and economic changes are of course "bound up with the emergence of new dominant ways in which we experience space and time" (Harvey, 1989, p. vii).

This new experience of space and time, as Harvey and the other commentators suggest, is characterised by a move towards an increased sense of global interconnectedness, such that flows and mobility across space have accelerated in the contemporary era.[20] The intensification and stretching out of movements and flows, is captured in Gidden's definition of globalisation as "...the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). These theorizations of globalisation in terms of "networks", "interconnections" and "flows" can also be found in sociological literature (Castells, 1996, 1997), cultural studies (Hall, 1992) and anthropological literature (Friedmann, 1994).

Quite clearly globalisation results in increased connectivity. But we need to delve deeper and ask: what sort of opportunities does globalisation create for places and spaces? Tomlinson uses an unusual example to illustrate the effect of globalisation on time and space. Interestingly, "When an international flight crosses Saudi Arabia, the hostess announces that during the overflight the drinking of alcohol will be forbidden in the aircraft" (1999: 116). Here we see the intrusion of the social boundaries of religion that is forbidding the consumption of alcohol, imposing itself on space, and in this case in the air.

Manuel Castells (1989) suggests that localities must be seen as integrated within world-wide and transnational geographies. He argues that this has resulted in the replacing of the modern space of places with postmodern spaces of *flows*, seen in particular in deterritorialisation and the detachment of individual and group identities from local places in network societies (Castells, 1997). There is a move towards thinking about not only the places we live in but the 'spaces of flows' that connect and

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20 Some postmodernists would disagree with this being a new era, as terms such as 'postmodernity' (Soja, 1988 and Watson and Gibson, 1995) and post-Fordism (Amin, 1994) seem to suggest a historical rupture. They would reject any 'fixed' periodisation of history and the construction of yet another grand historical narrative.

bring those places into being (Castells, 1989). There is also increasing anxiety among social commentators that the 'end of history' and the 'end of geography' are near.

While there has been the rise in global uniformity there has also been a concomitant rise of ethnic particularisms". This has largely been due to feelings of "homelessness" in the global world. People feel detached from place and thus seek similarity. This is explored in the section below.

2.4.2 Deterritorialisation

Almost all theoretical traditions had advocated the demise of cultural localism and its replacement with a modern collective consciousness. Not only has this happened but the politics of particularism, of global difference within global uniformity has been revived. Bauman suggests that the postmodern age is the age of "neo-tribes". "Postmodernity, the age of contingency fur sich, of self-consciousness, is also the age of community: of the lust for community, search for community, invention of community, imagined community" (1991:246). For Bauman (1991), the desire to belong is largely a response to the disruption and disintegration of the familiar way of life precipitated by globalization.

Thus one of the primary signifiers of the era of globalisation is thus the deterritorialisation of the world, where communities now very rarely draw their culture or identity implicitly from a fixed area or space (if they ever did?), and where an immutable link between place, culture and identity does not exist.[21] Scholars argue that globalisation *fundamentally* transforms the relationship between the places we inhabit and cultural practices and identities. Morley and Robins (1995:87) claim that, "Places are no longer the clear supports of our identity."

Migration in the postmodern era across nation states on an unprecedented scale has in some ways contributed to this phenomenon. In Kevin Robins' view:

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21 Although it is argued that there has never been an immutable link between place and culture and identity.

'Globalisation is profoundly transforming our apprehension of the world: it is provoking a new experience of orientation and disorientation, new senses of placed and placeless identity. The global-local nexus is associated with new relations between space and place, fixity and mobility, centre and periphery, 'real' and 'virtual' space, 'inside' and 'outside', frontier and territory.'(Robins, 1991, p.40)

Several theorists have used the term "deterritorialisation" to describe the relationship between place and culture in the context of globalisation (Appadurai, 1990; Tomlinson, 1995), while Giddens (1990) uses the term "dis-placement". However, the underlying thread is what Garcia Canclini calls the loss of the 'natural' relation of culture to geographical and social territories (Tomlinson, 1995:229). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that the world we live in now seems to create communities that are rhizomatic and even rootless.[22] Arjun Appadurai (1990) argues that 'rootless communities' or 'homeless communities' are the central problematic of cultural processes in today's world.

As described earlier, Giddens' central argument is that modernity freed social relations from the restrictions of face-to-face interaction in spaces, allowing for the *stretching* of social relations across time and space. Although individuals still exist in certain spaces and places, the world has become increasingly interconnected at a rapid pace. So much so, that Roland Robertson (Tomlinson, 1999:6) suggests that globalisation has led to "the compression of the world into a *single place*". Globalisation has created an era where face-to-face communication as a means to establish and maintain communities has become obsolete. This has been replaced by satellite television and the Internet where communication with loved ones is rendered into bitmap images and satellite communication. This has led to the emergence of a "global community".

In addition Appadurai (1996) argues that deterritorialisation brings populations from third world countries into the lower economic rungs of first world countries. Sometimes these new diasporic communities create an *exaggerated* sense of

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[22] Arjun Appadurai (1990) argues that in essence the global community today has what Jameson refers to as a "nostalgia for the present" (1989). Appadurai unpacks the Filipino desire for Americanness and this he suggests is nostalgia without memory. And the paradox is that America through missionization destroyed Filipino culture and yet there is a desire amongst its people for Americanness

attachment to or *criticism of* the politics of the nation state. Take for instance the Hindu case, where there is a rise of Hindu fundamentalism throughout the world. Appadurai and Breckenridge (forthcoming) argue that the rise in Hindu fundamentalism can be linked to the creation of a network of financial and religious identification with India, both within and outside of the country.

In the case of South Africa, the South African Indian community, while separated from India for the past 140 years, still displays an attachment to India and has views on the actions of this nation-state. This is generally articulated in relation to particular events in the media. For example, South African Indians held clearly expressed views on the nuclear tests in which India was involved in a few years ago.

2.4.3 The Globalisation/Localisation Dynamic

These forces of globalisation create an interesting dynamic between global and local forces. Appadurai (1996) suggests that *the* dominant problematic of today's interactions is the tension between cultural homogenisation/globalisation and heterogenisation/localisation. Globalisation on one hand proposes that the "world has become a single place", while on the other hand localisation proposes that "cultural differences" in the world are becoming of paramount significance. We can see this through the rise of new social movements, such as the peace movement. During the war against Iraq, people united for peace around a common concern that is against going to war. This global peace movement reflects the globalisation of the world. McDonalds, a global food chain, creates its menu to suit the tastes of the variety of consumers throughout the world. This dynamic between localisation and globalisation provides the context for much of the social struggle today.

Some argue that this era of globalisation has signaled the emergence of a "global culture". It is critical to unpack the conceptual terrain of "global culture", thought of as the expression of deterritorialisation and a borderless world. Global culture is not benign: far too often globalisation has been associated with the "McDonaldisation" of society, "we are one world" ideology. The sentimentality of this notion that we are all

brothers and sisters under the skin disguises the unequal consequences of globalisation, where some parts of the world are increasingly far more "connected" and better off than others. Marshall McLuhan theorised this world as a "global village" (Appadurai, 1990), although critics of his work argue that his theorisation does not expose the unequal effects of globalisation.

While globalization homogenizes the global spaces that individuals inhabit, by cutting across nation states and creating global cultures, communities are also forming "defensive identities" or "essential identities". Various commentators suggest that there is now an exponential rise in culture-based political movements (Friedmann, 1994). As noted, the growth of migration has led to the formation of "new diasporas", that is people with multiple allegiances to place. It is possible to locate these identities along a continuum from fundamentalist and essentialist identities drawing from their homeland, to hybrid identities and finally to a global identity characterized by "homelessness", and it is this kind of approach that is adopted later in the analysis.

Roland Robertson (2002) states strongly that globalisation in the early 1990s was leading to increased cultural differentiation and not cultural homogenisation. We see this through the reassertion of ethnic and national identities – for example, in the turn back to a fundamentalist Muslim movement in Afghanistan under the Taliban, in the rise of new forms of regional and ethnic nationalisms in Africa and in the collapse of communist states into new nations.

Globalisation then, has to do with movement and circulation and it also has to do with power - that is the differing relationship of distinct social groups to these flows and movements. This is what Massey (1993: 61) refers to as the 'power-geometry' of globalisation, where some social groups initiate movement and others do not, but are nevertheless determined by it. Massey argues that the effects of globalisation are unequally felt by different nations.[23]

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[23] Postcolonialism is a discourse that in many ways supports the latter contention that is that globalisation unequally affects the world.

Most geographers agree that what does *not* follow from the considerations above is the spatiality/geography of a 'borderless world' (Oncu and Weyland, 1997). Inherent in the concept of global flows, is the ability to transgress boundaries between nation-states, between racial, ethnic and gender groups, between public and private spheres. This does however mean an increasingly borderless world, one in which boundaries have lost their relevance, as implied by the use of terms such as 'spatially fluid/permeable/porous' and 'territorially unbounded' in the literature. As Keith and Pile (1997) amongst others have noted, in this new world "'Borders' have become the locus of struggles among a variety of social actors, mobilised to reassert and to redefine their boundaries ... [borders are where] these struggles 'take place'".

Finally, it is interesting to refer to the work of Marc Auge, a French anthropologist who has done similar work to David Harvey, but with whose insights geographers are less familiar (see Mcdowell, 1999). Auge (1996) too argues strongly that "place" has not become a meaningless concept in the new era.

Auge suggests that the key experience in the transformation of space and time is that of excess or superabundance. He prefers to use the term "supermodernity" to postmodernity as it more accurately represents what is happening, that is a speeding up rather than a radical transformation. Auge argues that our perception and use of time as linear has changed. The speed-up in time results in the events of the past becoming history almost immediately due to an overabundance of events and information about them. In his consideration of space, Auge suggests that the effect of spatial overabundance of the present is less to subvert, than to complicate an understanding of space - 'for souls and territories still exist, not just in the reality of facts on the ground but even more in that of individual and collective awareness.' (1996, p. 35).

2.4.4 Ethnoscapes

Appadurai (1996) proposes five dimensions of global cultural flow, that is, ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes. The suffix 'scape' is given to describe each one of these global cultural flows as they are not

objectively defined constructs, rather they are dependent on the context, that is the social, cultural, political and economic circumstances, and thus their creation is fluid, dynamic and "flows". For Appadurai (1996:11), these five terms set the basis for the conditions under which global cultural flows occur, that is, cultural flows "...occur in and through the growing disjuncture between ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes."

Those landscapes that are created through the interrelation of these five dimensions are what Appadurai (1996) terms "imagined worlds". This is an extension of what Anderson calls "imagined communities". Essentially Appadurai (1996:7) argues that these "imagined worlds" are "... multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the world."

Ethnoscape as one of the defining terms of the global cultural flow is of relevance to this study. Appadurai (1996:7) provides the following definition of ethnoscapes:

> "...the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree."

Appadurai (1996) concedes that there are still relatively stable communities that exist. But these stable communities are now cross cut with the desire or need to move around. In addition the geography of movement is not limited to small distances: communities even within deep rural areas now accede to moving outside their continent.

The relevance of the analytic term "ethnoscapes" that Appadurai (1996) proposes is firstly that this is not an objectively defined relation; rather it is dependent on the particular context. The South African Indian community is located within a particular historical and social context, and the idea of "ethnoscape" is a useful one in beginning to examine this. Secondly Appadurai's approach (unlike many others) emphasizes the other dynamics, social, economic and political, that are at play to create global cultural flows. Appadurai's approach to global cultural flows thus highlights the new effects of

globalization on current and older diasporic communities. He argues that the shapes of cultures grow themselves less bounded and more fluid and politicized. This is part of the general thrust of the criticism, discussed earlier, to traditional anthropological work which has seen cultures as localized and tied to place. Finally Appadurai (1996) feels that we should look at global cultural forms as fundamentally fractal, lacking regular boundaries or shape. These cultural forms are also overlapping. It is these latter two dimensions that serve to produce dynamic cultural flows.

What Appadurai (1996) is suggesting is crucial as it provides important theoretical tools for analysing the findings of this thesis. While it is beyond the scope of this work to identify all five dimensions and analyse their global cultural flow, rather the point is that these five dimensions are interrelated and overlap and create fractal cultural flows.

2.5   Creating Imagined Communities: Diasporic Identities

Thus far the literature review has discussed the effects of globalisation on cultural identities. The main point is as the world becomes increasingly globalised, there is a rise in ethnic particularisms, notwithstanding the rise in homogenisation of cultures. Theoretical literature suggests that this leads to the creation of "imagined communities". Specifically this section focuses on the Indian diasporic community.

2.5.1 Nations, Nationalisms and Identities

> *Nations:*
> "...that they are imagined does not mean they are imaginary."
> (Jenkins, 1996: 28)

In the above quote, Jenkins makes a central point about the mythical and yet at the same time very real nature of nationalism. In theoretical literature it is understood that nations are imagined, but as Jenkins says this may not necessarily mean that they are "imaginary". These discourses of nation have real consequences.

Ernest Gellner (cited in Hall et al 1983: 6) points out, while national identification is a critical component of modern society, it is a mythical construct:

> "The idea of man (sic) without a nation seems to impose a (great) strain on the modern imagination. A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. All this seem obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so very obviously true is indeed an aspect, perhaps the very core, of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such."

National identities are not things that we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to "representation". For instance, we only know what it is to be English/Indian/African, by the set of meanings attached to being English/Indian/African. Individuals in a nation are not only citizens of a nation, but they also participate in the *idea of nation* as represented in its national culture. According to Schwarz (1986:106), "A nation is a symbolic community and it is this which accounts for its 'power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance.'"

The following is taken from Homi K. Bhabha's Introduction to *Nation and Narration* (1990):

> "Nations, like narrative, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation - or narration - might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. It is idea whose cultural compulsion, lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force. This is not to deny the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress, the narcissism of self-generation, the primeval present of the Volk ..."

The idea that nations are primordial, with a sense of a long established tradition, is mythical. They are rather imagined entities which, "like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye" (Bhabha, 1990:1).

Various commentators suggest that a national culture is a discourse - a way of constructing meanings which influences and organises both our actions and our conceptions of ourselves. In *Modernity and its Futures* (1992: 293) it is argued by

Stuart Hall that "National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it." There is then a "narrative of the nation" that is told and retold in national histories, displayed in museums etc. These events provide a set of stories that represent the shared experiences that, as members of the "imagined community", we all share in our "mind's eye". As Bill Schwarz observes:

> "These make up the threads that bind us invisibly to the past. Just as English nationalism is denied, so is the fact of its turbulent and contested history. What we get instead ... is an emphasis on tradition and heritage, above all on continuity so that our present political culture is seen as the flowering of a long organic evolution." (cited in Hall et al , 1992:155).

Generally national identity, like cultural identity, is seen as a fixed object that is passed from generation to generation. It is also seen as intimately tied to place, where the territory becomes imbued with ethnic or national ideas, forming a combination of "blood and soil" (Crang, 1998). Thus very often the territory is described in bodily metaphors, such as "fatherland" or "motherland". (Certain South African Indians describe India as their "motherland", see Chapter Five). The territory then is generally seen as the container for holding cultural belonging, such that culture is tied to a place and place to a culture.

Crang (1998) suggests that three contradictory things are happening in this vision of culture and space. Firstly identity is defined by a spatially co-extensive culture. That is, the culture is imagined as unitary and bounded by that space. Secondly culture is made into a thing, such that it is no longer the way people behave that gives rise to the label, but it is the label that defines behaviour. The analysis presented in Chapter Five highlights particular discourses of "appropriate" Indian behaviour in South Africa that many cultural leaders feel are under threat because of various factors such as "Westernisation". As Crang (1998: 382) observes, "...culture is no longer seen as the outcome of material and symbolic practices but instead as the cause of those practices - a hidden essence lying behind the surface of behaviour." And of course ethnic

nationalism is partly created out of fear, that this essence can be threatened or contaminated or even diluted by outside forces.

The phrase "imagined community" is taken from the work of Benedict Anderson (1991) who examined the rise of the nation and the nation state. Anderson (1991) argues that national identity is an "imagined community" and that the differences between nations lie in the different ways in which nations are imagined. In his book *Imagined Communities* (1991: 19) he describes the nation's ambivalent emergence:

> "The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness ... [Few] things were (are) suited to this end better than the idea of nation. If nation states are widely considered to be 'new' and 'historical', the nation states to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past and ... glide into a limitless future. What I am proposing is that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being."

As already noted, in this discourse of nations, there is an emphasis on origins, continuity and tradition. National identity is generally portrayed as primordial, that is the essential characteristics of the national character are seen as unchanged throughout history. In the discourses surrounding Indian national identity, South African Indians very often represent it as being unchanged through time and portray the image of people still adhering to customs and traditions in an absolutist manner.

National identity is so often symbolically grounded on the idea of a pure, original people or "volk". This formulation is shown in the recent events surrounding the Boerevolk described in Chapter One. Individuals that subscribe to this notion feel that they belong to a pure nation. Yet the "Boerevolk" is an imagined community, which has very "real" political and economic consequences.

Tradition/Translation

Another discursive strategy deployed in relation to national culture is what Hobsbawn and Ranger call the "invention of tradition", which is intrinsically related to national culture being seen as somehow essential. Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983:1) suggest that:

"Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented ...'Invented traditions' [means] a set of practices ... of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition which automatically implies continuity with a suitable historical past."

They provide the following example related to English national culture that shows the "invention of tradition":

"Nothing appears more ancient and linked to an immemorial past, than the pageantry which surrounds British monarchy and its public ceremonial manifestations. Yet ... in its modern form it is the product of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983: 1)"

Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) are suggesting that the British monarchy with all its 'traditions' are not an institution dating from time immemorial but rather a very recent construction.

Thus, very often when societies speak of tradition, this tradition has been "translated". Homi Bhabha (1990: 16) argues that "...Where once we could believe in the comforts and continuities of Tradition, today we must face the responsibilities of cultural Translation".

One further example is sufficient to illustrate the "invention of tradition". Kevin Robins uses recent developments in the British heritage industry to show how tradition has actually been invented. Robins (1999) suggests that in the context of the emergence of heritage cultures, 'tradition' has been subject to unprecedented change.[24] Described broadly, heritage culture in Britain has attempted to reclaim its past, which is currently disputed through the emergence of new communities. As Robins (1999: 41) argues:

"Older certainties and hierarchies of British identity have been called into question in a world of dissolving boundaries and disrupted continuities. In a country that it now a container of African and Asian cultures, the sense of what it is to be British can never again have the old confidence and surety. Other sources of identity are no less fragile. What does to mean to be European in a continent coloured not only by the cultures of its former colonies, but also by

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[24] Jane Jacobs' work in the Australian context is also relevant here (1996).

American and now Japanese cultures? Is not the very category of identity itself problematical? Is it at all possible, in global times, to regain a coherent and integral sense of identity? Continuity and historicity of identity are challenged by the immediacy and intensity of global cultural confrontations. The comforts of Tradition are fundamentally challenged by the imperative to forge a new self-interpretation based upon the responsibilities of cultural Translation."

Perhaps one can see something of this process in the way particular Hindu practices are carried out in South Africa, where certain rituals are not practiced during a particular time of the year as it is considered as inauspicious or a "bad month". If one had to look closely at this practice, this time was the monsoon period in India and thus inhospitable to these practices. In South Africa, this has been transplanted as a Hindu tradition - an "invented tradition".

As already discussed, globalisation has led both to the *strengthening of local identities* and to the production of *new identities*. This strengthening of local identities can be seen in the strong defensive reaction of those members of dominant ethnic groups who feel threatened by the presence of other cultures. In the UK for example as Robins (1999) suggests, this defensiveness has produced a revamped "Englishness", an aggressive "little Englandism" and a retreat to ethnic absolutism.

There is also evidence of the alternative consequence of globalization, the production of new identities. This can be encapsulated in what Stuart Hall refers to as "new ethnicities" in Britain. Generally this began to occur in the 1970s, grouped around the signifier "black", with which both Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities identified. By taking on this common identity, these people were arguing that they should be treated as black despite the fact that they do not all share the same physical or symbolic characteristics. They are generally excluded in English society, they are the marginalised and therefore by taking on the "black" identity they are pointing to their shared political circumstance (although they still retain their own individual cultural traditions).[25] Interestingly many South African Indians who identify deeply with South Africa and the apartheid struggle display such significations, for although they

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25 This "black" identity, of course, exists alongside a wide range of other identities.

maintain their Indian identity, they also state clearly that they are "African" (See Chapter Six).

Another discursive strategy that is deployed is that of the "foundational myth". This is a story which locates the origin of the nation, the people and their national character so early that is lost not in "real" time but in mythic "time". These "myths" provide a narrative in which an alternative history or counter-narrative is presented, which in many cases predates colonisation. A clear example is provided by South Africa with its current presidential flagship political ideology of "African Renaissance", an attempt to unify the African continent. Various commentators suggest that this in many cases serves to produce discursively an Africa that preceded colonisation, although what it neglects is that even prior to this period; there were still many tribes and societies that did not see themselves as peacefully one "African continent".

In India too, a secular society which is also raven with different castes and religious beliefs that never existed in cohesion, these tensions are rife. As Arundhati Roy (1998: 18 cited in Mitchell: 261) suggests:

> "...There's no such thing as an Authentic India or a Real Indian. There is no Divine Committee that has the right to sanction one single, authorized version of what India is or should be. There is no one religion or language or caste or region or person or story or book that can claim to be its sole representative. There are, and only can be, visions of India, ways of seeing it - honest, dishonest, wonderful, absurd, modern, traditional, male, and female. They can be argued over, criticized, praised, scorned, but not banned or broken. Not hunted down."

For Roy, the idea of an "Authentic India" is meaningless. There are rather different ways of representing India and also India representing itself. She explodes the myth that there are particular signifiers surrounding India.

At this juncture two postcolonial critics, with rather contrasting positions are worth noting. On the subject of India, the source of originary myths is seen as important. Gayatri Spivak comments:

"India, for people like me, is not really a place with which they can form a national identity because it has always been an artificial construct ... And 'Indian-ness' is not a thing which exists. Reading Sanskrit for example - I can't call that Indian, because after all India is not just Hindu. The 'Indic' stuff is not India." (Spivak, 1990: 39).

These contestations over signifiers of Indian-ness are an important theme in Chapters Five and Six. For example, since many South African Indian Hindus see India as the site of all religious faith, they call into question why South African Indian Christians would feel an allegiance to India.

V.S. Naipaul on the other hand captures a very different sense of Indian identity, clearly a rejection of origins and identity which he sees as mysterious and thus undesirable:

'To me the child the India that had produced so many of the persons and things around me was featureless, and I thought of the time when the transference was made as a period of darkness ... The light was the area of my experience, in time and place. And even now, though time has widened, though space has contracted and I have travelled lucidly over the area which was to me that area of darkness, something of the darkness remains, in those attitudes, those ways of thinking and seeing, which are no longer mine." (Naipaul, 1964: 33).

Naipaul's response points to the impossibility of recreating or reimagining the homeland. However both Spivak and Naipaul are speaking of the possibilities, the ambiguities and the contested nature of the post-colonial experience.

2.5.2 Diasporas and Imagined Homelands

"Oh it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history, subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement that we learnt our most enduring lessons." (Bhabha, 1994:40)

As discussed earlier, migration has occurred at an unprecedented scale in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Van Hear, 1998). This rapid growth of migrations has led to the formation of new "diasporas", that is people with multiple allegiances to place.[26] Van Hear (1998) notes, that the emergence of these new transnational

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[26] Of course, the "diasporas" are not only a recent phenomenon. The Jewish Diaspora is an example.

populations has attracted increasing interest and commentary in recent years. Interestingly, in relation to the above discussion on nationalism, theorists state that the emergence of these diasporas can be thought of as a form of "transnationalism". Transnationalism refers to the formation of social, political, and economic relationships among migrants that span societies. Diasporas can be explained then through these transnational relationships that consist of dense networks of social, political and economic relationships. Clifford (1994) argues that contemporary articulations of "diaspora" are seen as a threat to nationalist myths, as potential subversions of nationality, because they are ways of sustaining connections with more than one place while practicing non absolutist forms of citizenship.

Etymologically, the term "diaspora" stems from the Greek work "diaspeirein", meaning "to disperse", or as "speirein" suggests, "to scatter". "Diaspora" thus refers to a dispersion, or scattering of people belonging to a new nation or having a common culture, beyond their land of origin. Historically, it has referred to such a dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian and Roman conquests of Palestine.

Benedict Anderson's work on national cultures as "imagined communities" (1983), bonded by a discursive sense of deep, horizontal belonging to an imagined origin and a mythical past, is also relevant to the various diasporas of the postcolonial era, and to the imagi(nations) of deterritorialised peoples. In "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", William Safran (1991) applies the concept to expatriate minority communities, and offers some defining geographical characteristics of diasporas. These include a collective homeland myth, fetishised through the imaginations of cultural memory and (trans) national desires and represented as mythical landscapes. They also include invented traditions, stories and ceremonies (1991). As the letter to the Editor states, "...But I still have these lingering "British" feelings and I am a total Anglophile, pining for something I never really knew" (See Box 3)

Stuart Hall argues that the diasporic experience is lived and mobilized more through 'routes' than 'roots' (1995). Repudiating any sense of culture as closed, impermeable and unified object, and also rejecting the view that cultural identity is an ideal, fixed condition which individuals seek to preserve, Hall contends that cultures never remain static, 'pure' and true to their origin, particularly in the process of diaspora. The ('original') 'home' cultures of the displaced/marginalized groups are obliged to negotiate with the ('original') 'host' cultures of other, dominant group/s. (See Box 3 for a Letter to the Editor describing the diasporic experience).

Diasporic culture is thus a product of the constantly configuring, never-ending and complex process which occurs when immigrant or otherwise displaced cultures selectively adapt to host cultures, intermingling and evolving to form a 'new' culture related to but distinct from both the original home and host cultures. This transcultural process can be described as 'hybridisation'.

Postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha views hybridity as the product of "cultural translation", in which diasporic identities are constantly being renewed and transformed through difference. The hybrid subject negotiates cultural difference through the "performative interplay between fetish and disavowal", a to-and-from movement between 'home' and 'host', which is also a process of negotiation, ambivalence and rupture (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's concept of the hybrid, articulating both dominant and marginal discourses long associated with diasporas and other forms of postcolonial contact, opens space for cultural strategies as active forms of resistance. Generally resistance to the dominant and hegemonic cultural forms. The hybrid subject attempts to "disrupt" the "other" culture or the "essentialist" culture.

Box 3: Homesick for "Britishness" (*The Natal Witness*, 21 April 2003)

What a wonderful article by Adrian Furnham (*Witness* April 11). It made me quite "homesick" for the "Empire" and "Britishness". It brought back memories of standing before the film for *God Save the Queen*, having an ayah and a bearer in India. Being taught to remember all of Henry VIII's wives, although why anyone should learn them is beyond me. And a host of memories that had been lurking in my subconscious had been dredged up when I saw *Monsoon Wedding*.

My particular colonial journey started in Poona (now Pune), in the forties, which ended on a train to God Knows Where during the partition. I do recall hundreds of Indians hanging onto the train and being shot at, and also seeing chopped up bodies at stations. My grandmother wrote a short article on this journey and my great-grandmother wrote one on the Indian Mutiny. My maternal grandfather had been in India since the 1700s for reasons I can't discover, and I think I was conceived at the Poona Club after a polo match. After the journey by train and troop ship (fortunately for my mother we had to sleep in a bar) to Southampton, we landed in post-war London and promptly starting queuing for rations. I recall roast lamb on Sundays cooked by my father as my mother had never been inside a kitchen and had to ask the dustman how to boil an egg. I regret to say that she never really did learn to pass that epic moment in her life.

My father - a product of Sandhurst - left the army and, as the only job he could get was selling ice-cream in London, decided to move to Rhodesia, after seeing an advert encouraging British people to take up jobs there. At one point, when we were all resident there, I clearly remember my mother saying to us kids: "Oh darling, how I wish you could have known what India was like growing up in". If it was better than being a kid in Rhodesia, it must have been a paradise of colonialism and pink gins! Of course, we did not have bearers to fan us with banana leaves in Rhodesia. What a tragedy. I do wish we had a cook though and a Shona who could speak Hindustani.

The problem with all this colonialism is that we had this really strange (in retrospect) upbringing that was more British than the British. Even living next door to South Africa, we weren't taught any South African history or geography, only English, Latin and French, and the wind patterns in the Outer Hebrides, until the sun actually did set on the Empire. Then it was sensible subjects like Afrikaans and maths, but too late for me as education didn't seem particularly important for girls.

England was always referred to as "home". A place neither my brother nor I ever went back to until we had left school and had only vague memories of a tiny flat and the sweet rations.

The various countries I and my children were born in no longer exist, which can impose enormous difficulties when trying to get passports.

The other downside was never having any relatives (the sensible ones stayed in England). No grannies or grandpas, uncles, aunts or cousins. Quite sad, really. One also has no roots - I feel "rootless". After all, when someone asks what nationality I am what as I supposed to say? Indian? South African? Rhodesian? As is happens, I have an Irish passport, but still feel like a homeless person sometimes, minus the cardboard box. I'm also very torn as to which sports team to support.

The other sad product of all this rushing around the "Empire" and being born in non-existent countries is that one's own children start doing the wandering thing, so once again you end up with no family. Of course, the dogs are a consolation and at least they have an identity. They are definitely New South African. Hopefully their country will last a few more years and that I don't have to get new passports for them.

After all this time I still feel "British", although I know perfectly well that that British no longer exists either and I have dropped the pronunciations like "s-or-it" (salt). Perhaps it was simply a fiction in our colonial parents' minds. Latin has been useful though, although I doubt that my father's Greek lessons were, in the long run. And at least my children didn't have to go to India once a year after endless terms at private (public) boarding schools such as Cheltenham Ladies' College, and learn which knife and fork to use. Now it's nuked takeaway on a TV tray. No little bells to ring for dinner, no cooks, no *Dhobis* to do the washing, no one to fan us in this horrible heat. I don't know how we survived!

My last remaining little link to this past died a couple of years ago, aged about 100 or something. One of my father's wonderful Ghurkha soldiers I corresponded with, who missed it all as much as we did as he languished in Lancashire, hating the cold. Of course all his children are now "British". What a world. But still I have these lingering "British" feelings and am a total Anglophile, pining for something I never really knew. God bless the Queen (the one in England).

A.C.Q. Valentine, Hilton

2.5.3 The Indian Diaspora

> "In the arcade of Hanuman House ... there was already the evening assembly of old men ... pulling at clay cheelums that glowed red and smelled of ganja and burnt sacking ... They could not speak English and were not interested in the land where they lived; it was a place where they come for a short time and stayed longer than they expected. They talked continually of going back to India, but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown, afraid to leave the familiar temporariness." (Naipaul, 1969: 193-41)

This quotation, taken from *A House for Mr Biswas* written by V.S. Naipaul, and describing an Indian community in Britain, perhaps also captures some key features of South African Indians' migration to South Africa. It is often said that many South African Indians chose to stay in South Africa in the "land of milk and honey" and not return to India, but clearly the reality was more ambiguous - South Africa was also a place of suffering. Their attachment to India was further complicated, when during apartheid, India was one of the first countries to impose sanctions on South Africa and this further alienated South African Indians from their country of origin.

Although many South African Indians did have an opportunity to return, many chose not to. However these feelings of "temporariness" were a constant feature in the colonial period and even extended into the apartheid and even the post-apartheid era. During apartheid, Dr Malan himself was quoted as saying:

> "If you (the Indians) don't go back to your home gracefully, I will shoulder you out without your bag and baggage, but if you go on like an obedient boy, sell up your goods and chattel on top of it, I will give you ten pounds and quietly go. Otherwise, I will make your life intolerable here but if you choose to remain here, do so as a pauper." (Aiyar, 1925:18)

Very recently, South African Indians "temporariness" was further accentuated during the controversy over the airing of Mbongeni Ngema's song *Amandiya*. Here South African Indians were ascribed blame for the economic straits and poverty in which many indigenous South Africans find themselves. Here again the song alienated South African Indians and they felt their "temporariness". (See Chapter Six)

The global Indian diaspora constitutes approximately nine million and there is surprisingly little theoretical literature on this experience (Mishra, 1996). In the lead essay in the foundation issue of the journal *Diaspora*, William Safran devotes merely twelve lines to the Indian diaspora and oversimplifies the characteristics of this diaspora.

There are three categories of Indian global migration viz., pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial migrations. Urmi Merchant (1998) cites documentation of the existence of migrations before the colonial period. The second category of migration, which includes the Indians that came to South Africa, arose out of the need for indentured labour in the other British colonies, particularly after the abolition of slavery. South Asia was a key recruiting ground. During this period, Indians migrated to South Africa, Guyana, Trinidad, Fiji, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Malaya and later East Africa, all of which acquired "little Indias" within them (Mishra, 1996). This diasporic experience is very different from the more recent migrations from India to the West, a movement largely dominated by professional and educated Indians.

The migratory movement of Indians has thus not been continuous, as there is a significant time lapse and different motivating factors for migration between the pre-colonial and colonial diasporas to the very recent diasporic movement. Thus Mishra (1996) splits the categories of the historically separated diasporas into "exclusive" (old) and the "border" (new) Indian diasporas. Mishra (1996) states that the old Indian diasporas were diasporas of exclusivism because they created relatively self-contained "little Indias" in the colonies. The Indian diaspora of "border" (new) however kept in touch with India through family networks and marriages and this was in many ways encouraged by the Indian government.

Recently there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the recent South Asian diaspora (Gopinath, 1995, Brah, 1996, Hansen, 2002, and Carter and Torabully, 2002, Raman, 2003). Although these sources are useful for thinking about the South African diaspora, there are as noted significant differences in the diasporic experience. The

more recent diasporic movement of Indians is contextually different in both time and space, so although this literature is drawn upon, there are limitations to its usefulness for the South African context.

Mishra's (1996) categorizing of the older Indian diaspora movement is however useful for the South African Indian context, since it includes and describes Indians' movement to South Africa. As stated earlier she categorises the earlier Indian diasporic movement as "exclusive". This differentiation is crucial since it is well documented that the South African Indians have left their mark on the landscape. This diaspora of "exclusivism" transplanted Indian icons of spirituality to the new surroundings, such as temples, as evidenced in the South African landscape.

The Diasporic Imaginary

Mishra offers a theoretical template to understand the South Asian diasporic movement captured in the "diasporic imaginary". Mishra states that:

> "The diasporic imaginary is a term I use to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or because of the political self-interest of a racialised nation-state, as a group that lives in displacement." (Mishra, 1996: 423)

Mishra (1996) offers a complex analysis of what the "diasporic imaginary" is. Drawing on Lacan and Salvoj ZiZek she proposes a theory that links a general theory of homelands to a theory of a *diasporic homeland*. Essentially the nub of her argument can be captured in the following quotation:

> "Salecl refers, after Lacan, to fantasy as something that is predicated upon the construction of desire around a particularly traumatic event. The fantasy of the homeland is then linked, in the case of the diaspora, to that recollected moment when diasporic subjects feel they were wrenched from their mother (father) land. The cause may be the traumatized 'middle passage' of slave trade or the sailing ships (later steamships) of Indian indenture, but the 'real' nature of the disruption is not the point at issue here; what is clear is that *the moment of 'rupture' is transformed into a trauma around an absence* that because it cannot be fully symbolised becomes part of the fantasy itself. Sometimes the 'absence' is a kind of repression, a sign of loss, like the Holocaust for European Jews after the war, or the Ukrainian famine for the Ukrainian diaspora. To be able to preserve that loss, diasporas very often construct racist fictions of purity as kind of *jouissance*, a joy, a pleasure around which anti-miscegenation

narratives of homelands are constructed against the reality of the homelands themselves. *Racist narratives of homelands are therefore part of the dynamics of diasporas,* as *imaginary homelands are constructed from the space of distance* to compensate for a loss occasioned by an unspeakable trauma." (Mishra, 1996: 423-424, own italics)

The "trauma" of the diasporic experience creates a fantasy, built largely around particular essentialist images of the homeland. These representations of the homeland are very often not a reflection of the homeland itself, and Mishra goes so far as to argue that "racist narratives of homelands are ... part of the dynamics of diasporas". These "essentialist" and "purist" notions of identity are tied to the homeland and play themselves out in the cultural identity dynamics of diasporic communities. Chapter Five and Six deal explicitly with the constructions of essentialist images of India amongst Indian South Africans in Durban.

2.5.4 Indian Diasporic Cultural Identities

A section on the negotiation and contestation of diasporic Indian cultural identities is included here as it further explicates their identity formations around the search for authenticity, in many ways illuminating the cultural struggle of South African Indians. In Chapter Three the migration of Indians throughout the world will be dealt in more detail. Here it is important simply to note the differences in the various diasporic experiences and to discuss the implications of these for the development of new (sometimes hybrid) cultural identities.

Nagar (1997 and 1998) has written about the Indian diasporic community in Tanzania (Tanganyika) that to a large extent migrated during the colonial period. Similarly to South African Indians, the colonial racial hierarchy favoured Asians as merchants, traders and civil servants. Also similarly to South African Indians, Tanzanian Indians enjoyed better educational facilities than did indigenous Tanzanians, and access to health and other facilities was relatively easy. This colonial social stratification was reinforced by rigid racial segregation of residential areas. Thus the dynamic "between place, racial discourse, power and institutional practice" that Anderson (1983)

uncovered in the case of Vancouver's Chinatown can also be seen at work in Dar-es-Salaam. The colonial racial hierarchy came under attack after Tanganyika's independence (1961) and the Zanzibar Revolution (1965) but the communities remained racially segregated.

Nagar (1997) focuses attention on the communal places that Asians congregate in, such as religious buildings, halls, clubs, bars and beaches. She suggests that since colonial times, these communal places have played an important role not only in maintaining the social divide between Asians and Africans but also in reinforcing the separate religious, caste and sectarian identities of the various Asian communities. Her analysis shows that the South Asian diasporic community in Tanzania is to a large extent creating an insular community, choosing to keep their identity very much intact and separate from the host community, especially in relation to communal places.

The migration of Asians to Britain has been qualitatively different. To a large extent it was the migration of educated and professional Asians during the postcolonial period. The writings of Hanif Kureishi and Sunetra Gupta, "recent" Asian immigrants to Britain, capture the dilemma that many Asians experience there. Cultural identification for these writers is a slippery and problematic concept and this younger generation finds itself conflicted as it attempts to create identities that defy the borders of the modern construct of the Western state – that is, an identity that defies neat geographic borders (See Chapter Seven). Commentators note that their novels and screenplays move from one nation to another, from one culture to another, with no clear sense of "home" and "abroad".

Cohen (1995) suggests that writers such as Kureishi and Gupta are attempting not to essentialise the "black" British subject or experience, but rather to unpack both how "Black-ness" and "British-ness" are culturally constructed for themselves and for the dominant culture. In doing so they are, in fact, doing more than simply restaging the narratives of English culture that the British state has used to define itself. Thus this is not simply an attempt to create a separate-but-equal narrative to run alongside the

dominant cultural narrative of the nation. Nor is it an attempt to assimilate the story of the Other into the dominant narrative. As Homi Bhabha (1994: 312) writes, the project is not simply to "invert the axis of political discrimination by installing the excluded term at the centre", or to "disturb the rationale of discrimination", but instead "the analytic of cultural difference intervenes to transform the scenario of articulation" of cultures.

Cohen (1995) also sees this as an attempt to disrupt the narratives forged to define the dominant culture, to hybridise the discourse, and to reconfigure the concept of all cultural identities as fluid and heterogeneous. Cohen (1995) further argues that these writers are working in a transnational, transcultural spaces that are defined by what Arjun Appadurai (1994:329) calls "imagined worlds", where alliances and allegiances coalesce, dissolve and coalesce again along lines of ideas and images that are continually re-staged across, rather than within, stable national cultural narratives.

Stuart Hall (1997: 177) observes that in response to the perceived threat of the "Other" in British society, a "defensive exclusivism … an embattled defensiveness of a narrow, national definition of Englishness, of cultural identity" is emerging. The voice of the diaspora in Britain is a particular threat to the dominant culture precisely because it is not simply colonisation in reverse, but it is also the voice of hybridity. In response to the dominant culture, hybridity disrupts the dominant discourse and "opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation many be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration" (Bhabha, 1996: 58).

Interestingly, while Asians that migrated to Britain claimed the signifier Black, thus identifying with other marginalised populations, recent Asian immigrants to America have to a large extent distanced themselves from other groups. Prashad (1999) suggests that while the "new racism" of ethnicity and multiculturalism allowed some Asians some space in American life, at the same time it put them against other historically oppressed people, namely the African Americans. Prashad (1999) argues, however, that the fact that the bulk of the US South Asians do not see themselves as

Asian is of little consequence in the wake of powerful representations of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent as "Asian" in the media, as well as in the political domain and in the academy. The following quotation captures the identity crisis that plagues many South Asians in the USA:

> "With your liberal minds, you patronise our culture
> Scanning the surface like vultures
> With your tourist mentality, we're still the natives
> You're multicultural, but we're anti-racist
> We ain't ethnic, exotic, or eclectic" (Asian Dub Foundation,
> cited in Kalra and Hutnyk, 1998))

The result of being labelled "Asian" and the shared struggles that it has produced has resulted in the creation of political identities, for example around the term "South Asian". (This is also evidence among South African Indians). As Prashad (1999) notes, the term "South Asian" provides some measure of inclusion within the US, even if it is almost meaningless within South Asia itself. The cultural commonalities between Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans, Nepalis and Bangladeshis draw these migrants together and the signifier "South Asian" allows them to feel some solidarity despite their national origins and religious differences. Lal (1994) writes that since India has been perceived to a large extent as the largest most unimportant country in the world, Asians in America have claimed allegiance to the "South Asian" identity, closely related to a Hindu identity.

Lal (1994) then suggests that amongst Hindus in the United States, the Hinduism has gained ascendancy. Though Hindus are just as fragmented here as in other parts of the world, recently they have been showing signs of cohering together in an attempt to carry forward those features of India's civilization that are seen as particularly emblematic of Hindu tradition and culture. Indeed they have collapsed the distinction between "Indian" and "Hindu". Ashok Singhal, General Secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an organisation set up to perform the cultural work of Hinduism and make it into a religion with a worldwide presence, is open about the political ambitions of this movement:

> "...the Hindu Rashtra can only be a state where there must be Hindu
> churches, Hindu mosques, for Hinduism is not a religion. It is the

> collective experience of thousands of individuals, unlike Christianity and Islam which are experiences of single individuals. In Hindu India, everyone has to call himself a Hindu" (VHP, Seventeenth cited in Lal, 1999:150)[27]

Commentators have pointed out that the rise in Hindu faith in the American context is based on Hindu devotional literature that is actually frozen in time. Though Hinduism in India has to a large extent evolved and changed with time, Hinduism in America seems to maintain the most retrograde features. Lal (1994) suggests that a cursory examination of *India-West*, a California based newspaper that has a circulation of almost 20 000, suggests that Hindus have embraced forms of worship that are followed by only the most dedicated Hindus in India. Later on in Chapters Five and Six we will see similar behaviour being shown by South African Indians.

Indian-American Hindus have taken to cyberspace to assert their own claims of Hindu civilization. Lal (1999) suggests that through cyber-space, Hindus have found themselves as part of a "global religion". Arjun Appadurai (1991:202) has referred to this as the "globalisation of Hinduism". Lal (1994:153-154) provides anecdotal evidence to suggest this:

> "...in 1995 when the news spread that murtis or images of Ganesh, the elephant headed god, had been drinking prodigious amounts of milk in Hindu temples; and so forth from Delhi and Bombay this news was rapidly flashed to Leeds, London, Leicester, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and elsewhere".

The South Asian diasporas are now linked through advanced global telecommunications (See Appendix E for screenshots of websites).

These issues of cultural identity among diasporic communities with their roots in South Asia, continue to be hotly debated. In Britain, some argue that South Asians constitute the largest minority group and therefore should not be subsumed within a black identity but should establish a separate identity (Koshy, 1996). However other activists claim that assuming a black identity is politically expedient and provides this

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[27] Lal (1994) writes that the RamJanmabhoomi Movement, which led to the destruction of the Babri Masjid received considerable support from Hindus settled overseas.

community with a greater voice. Basically the argument is that, in adopting a black identity, South Asians lose their cultural identity but gain a political identity.

Sharma and Hutnyk (cited in Koshy, 1996) argue that the whole issue is more complex than this, and that the term "black" leaves ample room for cultural contestation:

> "...the meanings of British Asian cultural identity and the rejection of black identity also assumes that British Asian identity, and cannot be exhausted by defining it as a South Asian "tradition" or as a response to white racism. For instance British Bhangra draws on Reggae, Dub, and Soul, using Punjabi musical forms and Western instrumentation. Since the ongoing struggle against racism requires the formation of multi-racial coalitions, the internal contestation of blackness would be more constructive than outright rejection."

I will conclude this review with a look at Bhangra/Asian Kool music as a site of hybridity.

2.5.5 Hybridity, Diaspora and Fashion: The Case of Asian/Bhangra Kool Music

> "Well, it seems like the funky days, they are back again
> Funky funky days they're back again
> And we're in vogue again
> Before the Gurkhas get called up again"
>
> (T. Singh Cornershop, "Funky days are back again", Wiiija Records, 1997)

Tejinder Singh's lyric, "we're back in vogue again" signals the re-emergence of the 1960s "hippy" craze for all things Eastern. Asian culture has been 'kool' in Britain for some time now. Fusion artists like deejays Talvin Singh, State of Bengal, Badmarsh and Shri and Apache Indian, to name but a few spearhead the new Indo-chic in Britain. This bhangra sub-culture has expanded into other Indian diasporic communities, such the United States and even South Africa. It has been widely suggested that the Bhangra music scene signals the formation of new, hybrid cultural forms.

While there is a strategic search for authenticity amongst various Indian diasporic communities, there is also the formation of hybrid identities, as this section attempts to

demonstrate. As Chambers (1994: 73) suggests, in the idea "of roots and cultural authenticity there lies a fundamental, even fundamentalist, form of identity that invariably entwines with nationalist myths in the creation of an "imagined community". On the other side of the coin, is hybridity that challenges these essentialist and fundamentalist notions of identity. By its very nature, Bhangra is a musical genre that appropriates a pastiche of musical genres from Black rap to classical Indian.

Various commentators such as Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha have written about the portrayal of such syncretic forms of Bhangra being a fusion of east and west. On the other hand, some commentators have questioned the ahistorical and simplifying character of many descriptions of contemporary British Asian youth culture (Ahmad, 2001). Nevertheless the British Asian kool is having an impact on the Indian diaspora, where to take the most visible instance; Madonna took up yoga several years ago and began singing techno tracks in Sanskrit.

So why is there this contemporary rage for things "Indian"? Kalra and Hutnyk (1998) suggest that this has everything to do with capitalizing on difference, that the "other" is still categorized as different and packaged in the global era as a consumable. As already noted, one of the central tenets of globalisation is the capture of media and cultural industries worldwide. These include diverse phenomena such as the extension of satellite television throughout Asia and the Middle East and the translating and dubbing of Hollywood movies into Hindi so as to gain commercial dominance with the local Bollywood cinema market.

Kalra and Hutnyk (1996) maintain that Bhangra music provides the space for the contestation of stereotypes of South Asians. With regard to rap music, Tricia Rose (1994:124) points out:

> "As is the case for cultural production in general, the politics of rap music involves the contestation over public space, the meanings, interpretations and value of the lyrics and music, and the investment of cultural capital. In short, it

> is not just what you say; it is where you can say it, how others react to it, and whether you have the power to access public space... The struggle over context, meaning, and access to public space is critical to contemporary cultural politics."

Certainly Bhangra music too has provided the space for the performance of hybrid musical forms.

Exploration with hybrid forms threatens the search for "authenticity" amongst diasporic Indian communities, and thus Bhangra music has come under attack by those wanting to assert an authentic Indian-ness. As Maira (1996:46) points out:

> "Selective importation of elements and agents of Indian culture has seen religious specialists, classical musicians, dancers and film stars touring the United States and performing at community events. Thus while there is a circulation of hybrid popular culture in the diaspora, including Indian films that often offer a cultural pastiche and remixes of Indian music, there is also a parallel transnational circuit that has helped to reify, and commodify, images of Indian identity overseas."

The selective importing of culture from the subcontinent is driven by memory and the politics of nostalgia, with immigrants fantasizing about the India they left a long time ago, a mythical land of spirituality, "good values" and unchanging tradition.[28] For the preceding generation of Indians in diasporic communities, the desire to "return to roots" expresses a sense of displacement which is, in most cases, based on emotional and political rather than geographical dislocation, since it was their parents that were spatially displaced. As Appadurai (1996: 30) observes, "one if the central ironies of global cultural flows, especially in the arena of entertainment and leisure" is that the youth culture is shaped by"nostalgia without memory". Of course these "recollections" are not entirely without memory as they are derived from renditions of India, made possible through their parents or grandparents, etc. But Appadurai's point is a valid and important one, with relevance to this study.

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28 Maira (1996) notes that the identity politics in the US also encourages a view of ethnic identity as a search for validating origins, as a 'roots' narrative whose authenticity must be preserved.

Commenting on the rise of bhangra youth culture in Britain, Gopinath (1995:10) writes of the tension that is produced as a result of this awareness of trying to recover something that was never actually lost:

> "Yet even while Bhangra was being used as a way of positing a shared, essential identity, the radical impossibility of that identity was always being referenced by its very form: bhangra songs that 'add the Western touch' for instance, inevitably involve the alteration of the 'culture' that they are supposedly only deploying strategically. In other words, these statements are enunciations of loss, of a yearning and longing to recover and recuperate that which is also simultaneously acknowledged to be irrecoverable."

Paul Gilroy (1993: 83-83) finds similar tension in his analysis of black diasporic culture, and attributes these rigid boundaries to 'rhetorical strategies of cultural insiderism' that support an 'absolute sense of ethnic difference' and construct the nation as ethnically homogenous. This tension of defining ethic identity as something that needs to be protected from diminution or dilution in the diaspora has a powerful impact on the politics of identity in the diasporic communities, a theme that will be explored in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

2.5 Conclusion

This theoretical overview has provided the necessary theoretical tools to understand the current context of South African Indians attempting to negotiate their identities in a "desert of new forms". It also provides the context to understand to some of the issues that a uniquely diasporic community faces in an increasingly globalised world.

The literature review has dealt with four sections namely:
- The New Cultural Geography;
- Debating Cultural Identity in the New Cultural Geography;
- Cultural Identities in a Globalised World; and
- Creating Imagined Communities: Diasporic Identities

The first section explains what the cultural turn has meant for cultural geography. How "culture" itself is understood has changed from "static" and impermeable to

culture as "flexible" and being constantly negotiated. Generally culture itself was also seen as separate from economy and politics, rather the new conceptualisation sees culture is seen as constitutive of it. This means that when cultures of particular groups are analysed, the political-economic context is also seen as a variable that affects culture. The new cultural geography accedes that the "roots" of culture are a myth. Rather cultures are created through "routes" forged through globalization.

The second and third section, explores the context of the debates around cultural identity and place. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected "communities" feel a sense of "homelessness" and detached from place. These processes have led to the crisis of identity. Also the way cultural identities have been understood and theorized about has also changed. Early constructions of identity were "essentialist". Essentialist identities conceived of the individual as "whole" and homogenous. Subsequently "non-essentialist" cultural identities were conceived that provided explanations for the fragmented communities. Non-essentialist cultural identities are theorized as "flexible", "constantly changing", relational, socially produced, situational, multiple and complex. Identity positions should never be taken for granted but interrogated and questioned. Further identities are conceived as non-essentialist because individuals who on the face of it fit into neat categories, such as Indian, South Africa and so on are actually differentiated by ethnicity, language, race, gender, social class, etc. Additionally identities are sometimes are negotiated as "essential" and thus "authentic" for strategic purposes, such as access to resources, etc. This process is referred to as "strategic essentialism".

The final section "Creating Imagined communities: Diasporic Identities" explains nations and diasporic communities as creating "mythical constructs". These communities are created around the idea that there are roots to their culture as well claiming authenticity. The Indian diasporic community is also a case in point. While there is a rise in assimilating in their host societies, there is also a move towards a "return to roots". This search for authenticity and the inauthenticity that prevails is a crucial tension that is also evident amongst the South African Indian community. This

theme of the tension between authenticity and hybridity is central to this dissertation and will be explored further in Chapter 5, 6 and 7.

Chapter Three

Background: Indians in South Africa

The Dignity of Labour[29]

Ye that heat and melt iron

Ye makers of machinery
Ye squeezers of juice from sugar cane
Ye drivers into the sea for pearl-oysters
Ye that drip sweat in a thousand trades
I praise and glorify you all

Ye that mould clay and make pots
Ye that hew wood and build homes
Ye the givers of fruit bright and green
Ye that till the wet lands and grow crops
Ye spinners and weavers of fine fabrics
God protects us from heaven
Ye on earth

Ye creators of songs and poems
Ye artists of the classical dance
Ye observers of the truth of the material world
And architects of its sciences
Ye that guide us in Virtues way
And enable us to experience the joys we seek
Ye are God in visible shape
We behold the divine in you!

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[29] This is a translation from the Tamil poem Nattu-P-Pattu by one of India's great poets and freedom fighters of the modern period, Subramani Bharathi (cited in Munsamy, 1997).

3.1   Introduction

The history of Indians in South Africa is well documented in literature (Kuper, 1957, Meer, 1969, Pahad, 1972, Freund, 1995, Vahed, 1995 and Desai, 1996). As early as 1904, while the indenture system of importing Indian labour on a contractual basis was nearing the end of its course, the then Governor of the British Colony of Natal, Lord Milner, described the Indians as "strangers, forcing themselves upon a community reluctant to receive them." (Vahed, 1995) The irony of this statement is that in the early years the British settlers in Natal persistently demanded large-scale imports of cheap labour from India. In 1948 even before the architect of apartheid, D.F. Malan, had came to power in the Union of South Africa, his Afrikaner National Party had already made its policy towards the Indian migrants crystal clear in its election manifesto: "Indians are a foreign and outlandish element which is inassimilable." (Vahed, 1995) The election manifesto also proclaimed that the National Party was determined to repatriate as many Indians as possible.

This chapter is divided into four sections. As well as periodizing Indian migrations and describing the South African Indian experience, the historical review also places the South African Indian experience within the wider Indian diasporic experience. The themes of analysis are:

- The Indian Diaspora;
- Early History of Migration of Indians to South Africa;
- Indians on African Soil; and
- *The Bitter Taste of Sugar*: The Contemporary Position of Indians in South Africa

3.2   The Indian Diaspora

People of Indian origin began to migrate overseas in significant numbers only in the nineteenth century due to colonialism. In a uniquely diverse pattern that has not been replicated by any other diaspora, except perhaps that of the Chinese,

Indians spread initially to the countries of Africa, Southeast Asia, Fiji and the Caribbean (Jain, 1993). This first wave was associated with the enormous demand for cheap labour that arose immediately after the British abolished slavery in 1833-1834. Other migrations followed. In the second half of the twentieth century, many of India's top professionals migrated to the West. In the 1970s, India's skilled and semi-skilled labour migrated in the wake of the oil boom in West Asia and the Persian Gulf (Kalra and Hutnyk, 1998)

Table One: Major Indian Populations outside India (www. Gopio.com)

Country	Total Indian Population in 2000	Percentage of Total National Population in "Host" Country in 2000
Arabia	1 400 000	61
East African Community	380 000	1
England	2 850 000	7
Fiji	470 000	63
South Africa	**850 000**	**19**
Mauritius	700 000	52
Reunion	240 000	47
Surinam	950 000	58
Trinidad	270 000	43
Rest of European Confederation	3 450 000	0.5

3.3   Early History of Migration of Indians to South Africa

A little known fact is that, while most Indians first came to South Africa as indentured labourers from 1860, Indians had in fact arrived here much earlier in 1653. Dutch merchants, returning home from their voyages to India and the East Indies, had taken their servants to the then Dutch Cape Colony and sold them as slaves to the early Dutch settlers. There they were made to work as domestic servants, or to join the African slaves. Between 1653 and the early nineteenth century there were already as many as 1 195 Indians in the Cape, forming 36.40% of the slave population (Jain, 1993)

Most of these Indian slaves had been shipped from Bengal or the Coromandal coast. They were unable to preserve their distinct identity in the Cape as "Indians". They married slaves from East Asia, other parts of Africa, or from the indigenous KhoiKhoi and San inhabitants. The descendants became known as "Malays". Interestingly these individuals under apartheid's classification became classified as "Coloureds".

The Indian presence in South Africa mainly owes its origins to the British Parliament's passing of the Act of Abolition in 1833, whereupon slavery was banned throughout the British Empire. The immediate response was that the African slaves abandoned their masters. In Natal, due to the shortage of labour and persistent demands from the colonial authorities, the British authorities in India decided to replicate the system of indentured labour that was already being implemented in Mauritius, in South Africa.

The term of indenture, negotiated by Britain and India was codified in Natal Law 14 of 1859 and was briefly as follows:
- Each labourer was to receive free passage from India
- Wages were set at 10 shillings p.m. with rations and quarters.
- The period of indenture was initially 3 years but this was extended to 5 years.
- Labourers were to be free from corporal punishment.

- 40 women had to accompany every 100 men.
- A proportion of higher-ranking immigrants were to be included in each party.
- At the end of 10 years residence in the colony, labourers had the choice of
    - A free return passage to India
    - Reindenturing for 5 further years
    - Accepting a piece of Crown land to the value of the return passage. (Calpin, 1949).

The first group of Indian 'coolies' (i.e. indentured labourers) comprising 342 men, women and children arrived at the port city of Durban on board the S.S. Truro on 16 November 1860. They were the first of 384 arrivals of indentured labourers, totaling 152 184 persons, that were shipped to South Africa over the next fifty-one years. Of this total, 62% were men, 25% women and 13% children.

According to a 1985 Report by Dr. Frene Ginwala (currently the Speaker of Parliament), two-thirds of these migrants were Tamil and Telegu speaking Hindus from Madras as well as from Mysore and surrounding areas. The rest of the migrants were predominately from Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. The vast majority of the indentured labourers were Hindus, less than 12% were Muslims and some 2% were Christians. (Ginwala, 1974)
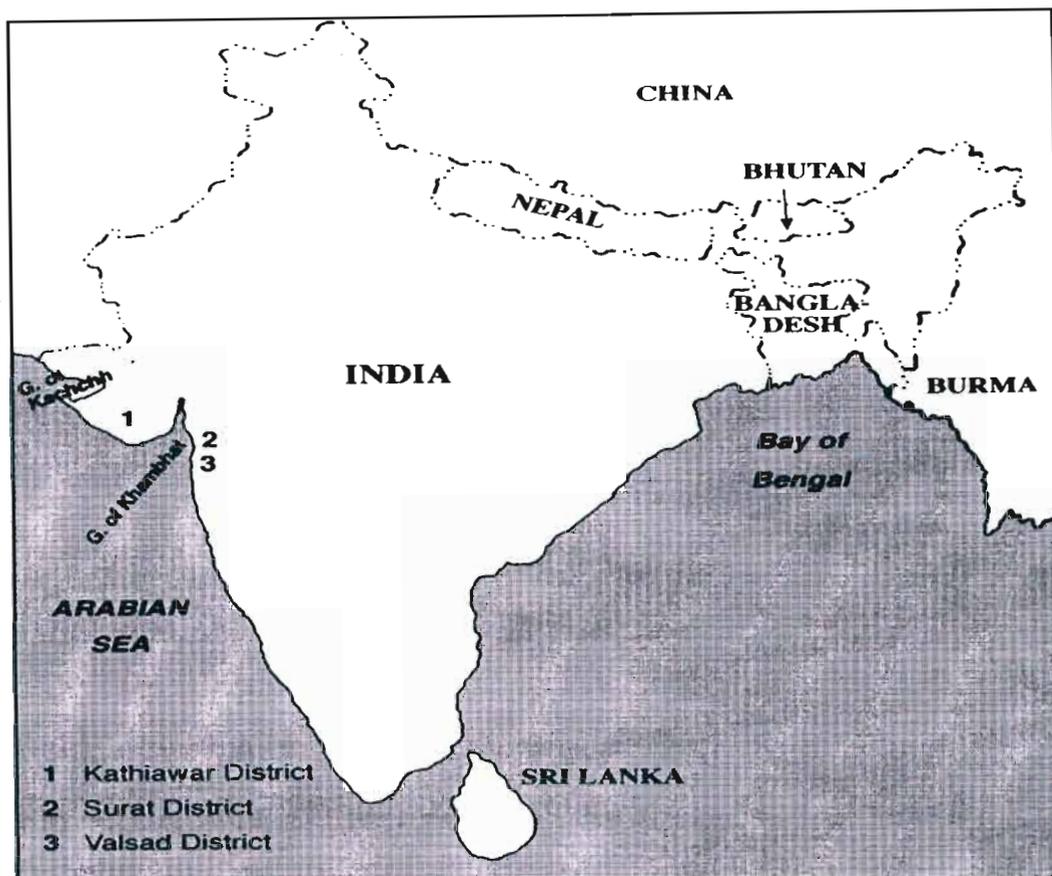
Figure 2:

District of Origin of Passenger Indians

The indentured labourers that came to South Africa were illiterate. They spoke a variety of languages - Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, Urdu as well as dialects from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which later merged to become a local version of Bhojpuri. Meshrie (1991) points out that the indentured labourers began to communicate in a new variety of English, a distinctly Indian incarnation of English, "South African Indian English."

In the early 1870s the first "passenger Indians" made their appearance in Natal. They comprised mainly of traders from India and Mauritius who came to Natal voluntarily and at their own expense. Many of these richer passenger Indians saw themselves as British and attempted to distance themselves from the indentured labourers. The new immigrants were a community of traders, both Hindu and Muslim, who hailed mainly from Gujerat. They entered the retail sector and effectively competed with the white retail stores. In the course of time they comprised around 10% of Indian immigrants. Much later teachers, accountants, and other professionals arrived in Natal, only to be assigned derogatory names such as 'coolie merchant', or 'coolie doctor'.

The main purpose of importing Indians into Natal was to meet the growing demands of the sugar industry. A game of chance was utilized to determine where the indentured labourers were assigned to work. As Meer notes, "Tickets were picked and according to the dictates of chance, friends, relatives and members of the same family were parted and assigned to new masters" (Meer, 1969: 10).

These indentured labourers worked under brutal and often harrowing conditions. They were "overworked (as much as a seventeen or eighteen hour day during overlapping crushing and planting seasons), malnourished and poorly housed ..." (Meer, 1969: 11). The indentured labourers were bound by contract for five years. The standard practice in the plantations was to work the labour from dawn to sunset, Sundays included. They were provided with meager rations and barest accommodation in the crowded barracks. Padaychee and Morrell (1991) quote some of the punishments received by the workers:

> " Gopeah - drunk, fined 10/- and locked up; Seerun - absent from work, to have good application of mustard and sand (rubbed dry on back).
> Murugaser - refused to work, strapped and sent to hospital for one week."

At the end of the indenture period, they could either decide to return to India or they were granted some land. The land grant was eventually dropped in 1891. Despite the horrendous working conditions, the majority of the Indians remained in South Africa, as they had practically banished themselves from their own country by going abroad at a time when crossing the seas (*kalapan*i) was taboo and attracted severe *prayaschit* (Vally, 2001).

The indentured labourers' hard labour in the plantations led to a substantial improvement in the Natal Colony's faltering economy. This was recognized by the Wragg Commission, which had been appointed in 1885 to enquire into the general conditions of the Indian population of Natal. It affirmed in its report that "… the stay of Indians in Natal was, in fact, a great boon to the colony". (Scott, 1994). Legally the indentured labourers were defined as "labour units". Educated sentiment in India was increasingly against indenture. In 1911, Gopal Krishna Gokhale declared in the Legislative Council in Delhi that the indentured recruitment of Indians for work in South Africa was "a monstrous system, iniquitous in itself, based on fraud and maintained by force". (Desai, 1996)

By the early 1890s Desai (1996:4) noted that a strong anti-Indian sentiment abounded amongst the white traders. Editorials that ran in newspapers termed the "Asiatic trader" a "parasite", "dangerous and harmful", "the real cancer that is eating into our vitals". The colonial administration enacted a number of discriminatory laws to stifle the economic progress of Indians. The Orange Free State excluded them altogether by a law in 1895 while the Cape limited their immigration into the province based on an education test. Although by June 1886, there were more "free" Indians than there were "indentured" Indians, they were free from contracts, but not free to vote as equal citizens.

Barrister MK Gandhi's Journey in South Africa
The rise of anti-Indianism coincided with the arrival of M.K. Gandhi into Natal. In May 1893 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a young barrister from Porbander,

arrived in Durban. Gandhi's arrival coincided with the determination of Whites to put an end to the "Indian merchant menace". Historians suggest that this campaign was directed against ex-indentured labourers who had now entered into other sectors of the economy and were perceived as "rivals". (Freund, 1995)

Gandhi through his legal training insisted that the colonial government should strictly implement Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858 in which she promised her Indian subjects equality with all her other subjects throughout the Empire. Gandhi is criticized for limiting his fight for non-discriminatory treatment to Indians only, excluding the Black community. However, through his philosophy of non-violence and *Satyagraha* he was able to provide the Indian community the leadership required to resist the racist policies of the Whites.

During Gandhi's stay in South Africa, the Natal Indian Congress was formed. Its forerunner was the Transvaal Indian Congress. These social movements consisted of a mass movement of labourers, traders and industrial workers, united in their fight against the discriminatory laws against them.

In 1914 when Gandhi finally left South Africa, through his stalwart efforts he had obtained a number of concessions for South African Indians, namely:
- Delaying the government's efforts to register Indians in Transvaal;
- Abolition of the £ 3 poll tax; and
- Formal recognition of Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages.

3.4   Indians on African Soil

Indians/African co-operation on rights issues

There were a number of laws that continued to be enacted in order to compel the Indian emigrants to "voluntarily" leave South Africa. But it was the Cape Town Agreement of 1927 between South Africa and the then British Government in

India that could have had the most far-reaching effect on the position of the Indian community. According to this Agreement, both parties agreed to encourage and facilitate the repatriation of Indians. However, very few Indians decided to repatriate. The far reaching effect of these agreements was that Indians decided to voluntarily continue to live in South Africa.

The government of the time soon forgot what it had agreed to and discriminatory legislation continued. The "Pegging Act" of 1943 and the "Ghetto Act" of 1946 were the two Acts that led to the Interim Government in India led by Jawaharlal Nehru cutting all diplomatic ties and ending trade relations with South Africa. This also had the effect of isolating the Indian emigrants in South Africa from India. This action on behalf of the Indian government still remains deep in the psyche of South African Indians and had complex and contradictory consequences for their image of India as a "homeland" (See Chapter 5).

During this period the character of the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses (NIC and TIC) had changed dramatically as they extended their fight against discriminatory laws to all victims of the inequitable system. The NIC and TIC was now headed by new leadership in the form of Dr YM Dadoo in Transvaal and Dr GM ('Monty') Naicker in Natal. Both Dadoo and Naicker realized that the future of Indians lay not in fighting white racism all alone, but that the struggle should be a combined effort and thus they joined forces with indigenous Africans. This resulted in the formation of the "Three Doctors' Pact" which was concluded in 1947 by Drs AB Zuma, YM Dadoo and GM Naicker who were presidents of the African National Congress (ANC), TIC and NIC respectively.[30]

These three organizations soon launched the "Defiance Campaign" which was a joint passive resistance movement. In 1955 the "Freedom Charter" was widely

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[30] Historical commentators suggest that few attempts have been made to analyse the interaction between Africans and Indians (Thiara, 1999)

endorsed by Blacks, Indians and Coloureds. The Charter proclaimed that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White". Steve Biko of the Black Consciousness Movement defined the term "Black" broadly as those who were not white. These fifty-year-old debates continue to play an important role in South African Indian consciousness today. (For a more detailed analysis see Chapter 6, where discourses such as "I am an African", which still reverberate, are discussed.)

At this point it is crucial to expand on the 1949 Cato Manor Riots and the 1985 Inanda Riots, events that appear to run counter to the new co-operation between Indians and Africans at the political level. These events too continue to resonate in the identity constructions of Indians in the KwaZulu-Natal region.

1949 Cato Manor Riots

> "Stones began to fly, glass shattered. Within minutes Victoria Street became a battleground of hostile crowds, flying missiles, damaged buses, and broken glass ... Looting began through broken shop windows ... Both African and Indian bystanders exploited a chance for recompense. All the signs were that state power would not intervene to protect Indian property." (Edwards and Nuttall, 1990: 23)

Although the Cato Manor Riots lasted only three days, it is argued that it has left an indelible mark on the psyche of South African Indians (Thiara, 1999). It began with a scuffle between an Indian shopkeeper and an African boy, which led to African violence against Indian people and property. According to Kirkwood and Webb (1949: 3), the violence which was concentrated in Cato Manor which housed both Indians and Africans, led to 142 deaths (50 Indians, 87 Africans, 1 white, and 4 unknown); 1087 injuries (503 Indians, 541 Africans, 11 Coloureds, 32 whites); the destruction of 247 houses, 58 stores, 1 school and 1 factory; while 1285 houses, 652 stores and 2 factories were damaged. The violence was on an unprecedented scale.

The nature and the cause of the event are as the literature suggests, highly contested. Naidoo (1984: 91) suggests that:

> "Africans put the blame on the Indians; Indians put the blame on the Whites. Whites put the blame on the Indians. The Government put the blame on the Africans and the Indians. African and Indian leaders put the blame on Government policy and its anti-Indian statements."

Clearly there is contestation as to who caused the event, however the purpose of this review in not to elaborate on this. It is the psychological effect of these events on South African Indians that demands analysis for this dissertation. Thiara (1999) suggests that the 1949 Riots have left an enduring legacy that still continues to affect the relationships between Indians and Africans.

In addition the Inanda Riots of 1985, although viewed as being different in nature to the 1949 Cato Manor Riots, conjures up the same images of fear and violence for South African Indians (See Chapter 5). In 1985, in protest against the assassination of a prominent lawyer, Victoria Mxenge, and the state of emergency, African attacks began on the "symbols of the system", but later spread to shops. In Inanda the violence turned against Indians and their property. Although these events did not lead to confrontation, Sitas (1985) concluded that by the end of the month 75 were dead and 1000 injured, with many Indians' shops and houses destroyed.

According to Meer (1985: 51), Indians complained that "… the government had created a situation where Africans were beginning to believe that the land was already theirs and Indians had no business remaining." Here we see the juxtaposition of Indian wealth and property with African impoverishment, a theme which echoes through the analysis undertaken in this dissertation (See Chapter 6).[31]

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[31] In reality, as Desai (2000) points out, it is not the case that Indians in Durban are all rich – "the poors".

Thiara (1999) suggests that the riots of 1949 and 1985 are the single largest historical factor underlying tensions between African and Indian people in KwaZulu-Natal. At one level, these tensions can be attributed to the opportunism of the white politicians and the state at the time. On another level it can be argued that along with the incidents of violence, these events provide proof for "vulnerable" Indians of the stereotype of the barbaric nature of Africans. Together with the events in Uganda (when Indians were expelled under Idi Amin), these local riots have led South African Indians to nurse a fear of being a minority.

Apartheid's Policy of "Divide and Rule"

The Group Areas Act was passed in 1950 and essentially it was a policy to divide the different racial groups and rule over them. Dr Frene Ginwala in a monograph published in 1985 wrote that between 1966 and 1984, no less than 83 691 Coloured and 40 067 Indian families had been moved under law to new locations.

Simultaneously special efforts were made to put Indians in a relatively more privileged position Vis a Vis Africans. In 1962, Indians immigrants were granted the status of permanent residents and thus were at least partly admitted to South African citizenship, almost a century after the docking of SS Truro in Durban Harbour. However their "citizenship" was questionable since they were not able to vote.

In 1982 a decision was taken by Parliament to set up a Tricameral Parliament with separate chambers for Whites, Coloureds and Indians, with no place for Blacks. The NIC and TIC tried to persuade the Indian community to withhold support for this project, however this was not successful and the Tricameral Parliament was introduced.

In April 1994 the General Elections were held and the African National Congress was voted into power. This leads us to a discussion on the contemporary position of Indians in South Africa.

3.5 *"The Bitter Taste of Sugar":* The Contemporary Position of Indians in South Africa

According to the South African Survey 2001/2002 undertaken by the South African Institute of Race Relations, there are 1 113 200 Indians in South Africa, comprising an estimated 2.5% of the total South African population.

Table Two: Breakdown by Race and Province, 2001

Province	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
Eastern Cape	6 086 483	481 381	20 977	387 209	6 976 050
Free State	2 489 156	81 564	3 204	367 012	2 940 936
Gauteng	5 841 322	309 590	180 727	2 029 491	8 361 130
KwaZulu-Natal	7 884 717	125 614	827 148	650 998	9 488 477
Mpumulanga	2 828 851	22 466	14 377	300 158	3 165 852
North West	3 428 405	49 209	10 697	261 782	3 750 093
Northern Cape	307 471	445 361	2 482	129 053	884 367
Northern Province	5 388 326	8 620	6 482	141 570	5 544 998
Western Cape	956 869	2 285 395	47 106	975 727	4 265 097
South Africa	35 211 600	3 809 200	1 113 200	5 243 000	45 377 000

(South African Survey 2001/2002)

As indicated in Table One above, KwaZulu-Natal has by far the highest concentration of Indians in South Africa, followed by Gauteng. The reason for this is that since sugarcane was grown along the eastern coastline, from their

indenture period Indians have lived closest to Durban. Also as has been stated earlier on, Indians' movement throughout South Africa has been legally restricted.

The 1996 Census provides the following statistical information on South African Indians:

- Over 94% of Indians use English as a first language;
- Working age is 15-65, which makes 40% of the market economically active;
- Unemployment is 11%;
- 74% are employed at levels of skilled/service/professional/managerial or higher. (South African Survey 2001/2002)

Therefore in Durban the contrast between a predominately Indian settlement such as Phoenix and the predominately Black township Kwa-Mashu - which happen to confront each other across a highway - is stark. Inequalities between the racial groups exist as well as within them, as a result of the historical past.

Indian fears

In 1993 sociologist Yunus Carrim declared emphatically that due to South African Indians' progressive political history, they would vote in the majority for the ANC in the country's first democratic election. He said:

> "It would seem that the history of Indian people, their past political engagement, their subordinate position under white minority rule and the virulent anti-Indianism of the NP in the past would constitute an important foundation for the ANC to win significant support among Indians." (*Daily News*, 10 November 1993)

However, and paradoxically, once apartheid had ended, there was general concern amongst South African Indians that the possible resentment amongst Blacks against Indians would result in reprisals, due to the superior status of the Indians in apartheid days. Sensing the Indian community's fears, Nelson Mandela and his senior colleagues in the ANC went out of their way to reassure the Indian community. However in the first non-racial elections, most of the South African

Indians voted for the National Party. In the following general elections in 1999, South African Indians voted predominately for the Democratic Alliance (DA).

Nelson Mandela said:

> "India came to our aid when the rest of the world stood by or gave succor to our oppressors. When the doors of international councils were closed to us, India opened the way. You took up our battles, as if they were your own. Now that we have been victorious, it cannot be said too often that our victory is also India's." (Jain, 1993)

Quite clearly attempting to allay the fears of South African Indians feeling marginalized, Nelson Mandela evokes the contribution of India to the struggle. Both Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela have been generally sympathetic to the sacrifices Indians have made to the struggle, assuring them that they belonged to the country's majority. Yet another complicating factor is that the promised economic benefits have not reached the poor and lower middle class of Indian society (See Chapter 6). These "empty promises" have led to the poor Indian becoming quite disillusioned about the "new South Africa".

In the months prior to the December 2000 local elections in KwaZulu-Natal, it was generally anticipated by the ANC leaders that the Indian community would cast their votes for the White-dominated parties, such as the DA. President Mbeki did not hide his disappointment and he was reported to have said at an election rally on 26 November: "Why does the Indian population in Durban which, for a century, was very active in the struggle for liberation, vote for the party of apartheid?" (*Daily News*, 27/11/2000).

The voting behavior of South African Indians is not clearly understood. An opinion poll by the South African Democracy Barometer argued that 56% of all South African Indians who responded manifested their "apartheid nostalgia" by their lack of faith in the democratic transition that had taken place.

Sanusha Naidoo and Adam Habib (1999) propose that in fact contrary to popular belief the vote in 1999 was not racial. Instead on careful examination of the 1999 election results, it is shown that different *classes* voted in different ways. The article demonstrates that lower income coloured and Indian people were more reluctant to vote for the ANC, while the privileged sectors of these communities voted for the ANC. Their analysis suggests that the "Indian community" is not homogenous as Thabo Mbeki suggests: people voted along class lines for different political parties and not in the majority for the White dominated parties.

Perhaps the next general elections to be held in 2004 will further reveal the interesting dynamics at play in the Indian community in terms of their voting behaviour.

3.6 Conclusion

Media reports in the period of analysis of this study carried detailed articles on acts of violence directed against Indians (See Chapter 5). The *Indicator* reported in October 1992 that the Indian township Lenasia near Soweto was "in the grip of unprecedented fear due to an upsurge of violent crime by Blacks against Africans." The possible resentment between Indians and Africans is discussed in this dissertation. This resentment is partly ironic, since Indians are generally perceived as affluent, yet this clearly not the case with a large proportion of the Indian community living below the poverty datum line.

A question that plagues most South African Indians is that a century and a half of existence in an "alien" land, and four or five generations of acculturation in a dominant white society, has quite possibly diluted their Indian-ness. Ms Ela Gandhi, a Member of Parliament for the ANC and the granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, articulated her South African Indian identity and said:

> "I am a South African; a very proud South African. The Indian-ness comes in at the level of culture, the way we eat, the kind of things we eat, the kind of things we appreciate - like music, drama, the language we speak. We only enrich our country by having all these different tastes and

habits. What I am basically saying is that this is where the Indian-ness stops." (Duphelia - Mesthrie, 2000)

Clearly Ms Gandhi feels that she is South African Indian and this is one of the identity discourses identified in the analysis chapter.

South African Indians have recently declared overwhelmingly that their home language is English. Thirty-nine per cent of the South African Indian population is Hindu, although it is a Hinduism that has shed some of the traditions and customs and developed others of its own. Almost 13 per cent of the South African Indian population is now Christian. Further almost 20% of the population is Muslim.

There is a strong desire amongst South African Indians to increase their cultural connection with India, as demonstrated through popular Indian dance and music. South African Indians recently contributed large amounts of money for the relief of victims of the Gujarat Earthquake, as indicative of their deep emotional bond with their "mother country". Although at the same time, South African Indians display a lack of interest in acquiring dual citizenship with India (See Chapter 5), since this might be viewed as having divided loyalties.

It seems that the present generation of South African Indians has again to face a difficult situation; that this is again a moment of crisis at which questions of Indian identity become contested and difficult to resolve. This dissertation grapples with these questions of identity and sense of belonging.

Chapter Four

Methodology

"No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within society, has completed its intellectual journey." (Mills, 1970 cited in Fairclough 1995)

4.1   Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to explain the research methods employed in this dissertation. When one unpacks the word "methodology", the word "method" derives from the Greek words for "road" (hodos) and "after" or "about" (meta): method is the route down which you go to pursue something[32]. This chapter discusses the context and the "road" traveled so as to identify the discourses and counter-discourses shaping debates about "Indian-ness" in the public sphere in Durban.

A research design or strategy can be described as:

> "… a bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that researchers employ as they move from their paradigm to the empirical world. Strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretation into motion. At the same time, strategies of inquiry connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analysis empirical materials … Research strategies implement and anchor paradigms in specific empirical sites, or in specific methodological practices, such as making a case an object of study." (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:14)

The literature review dealt with the "social constructionist" approach to identity. This approach has methodological implications, which will be discussed briefly at

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[32] See Nick Coudry (2000), who defines methodology before embarking on a 'method' for Cultural Studies.

the beginning of this chapter. The research methods employed in this study derive from the (related) insights of postmodern and poststructuralist philosophical thought. Both recognize that knowledge is socially constructed, and both argue that there is thus *no single truth.*

Postmodernism rejects the "totalizing" and "reductionist" approaches associated with modernism. Approaches are labeled "modernist" if they attempt to suggest a singular truth about the world. Poststructuralism, on the other hand, is a theoretical discourse that is largely concerned with language and it has deeply influenced the social sciences in the English speaking world.[33] Its basic argument, articulated by Lacan, is that "...Human beings become social with the appropriation of language, and it is language that constitutes us as a subject' (Sarup, 1993: 6). Language is based on a system of signification that does not provide an "objective" access to reality - language is not a transparency through which we see "truth" or "reality" but rather a structure or code that that needs to "decoded" in order to see the real meaning.

This study does not profess to provide *the* representation of Indian culture, as there are many representations. I am interested in the way in which people construct their worlds and thus influenced by poststructuralism since it focuses on the language they use to express this. As noted, this study is located within the ambit of cultural geography. Robinson (1998) notes that the new cultural geography places emphasis on the qualitative, the ethnographic and the reflexive. This study utilised qualitative techniques, in particular discourse analysis, to explore the nature of contested Indian identities in Durban.

The chapter is divided into the following main sections:
- The Methodological Implications of Social Constructionism

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[33] French poststructuralism grew out of the linguistic theories of F. de Saussure, the anthropology of C. Lévi-Strauss (structuralism), and the deconstructionist theories of J. Derrida (deconstruction) (Sarup, 1993).

- Philosophical Underpinnings of Research Methods in the "New" Cultural Geography
- The Fieldwork Process
- Conclusion

4.2   The Methodological Implications of Social Constructionism

This section addresses the methodological implications of the theoretical discourse, social constructionism[34]. *Realism* theorized identity as an objective essence, however in recent decades identity has been viewed more as constructed, created by people themselves. Social constructionism suggests that objects that appear "natural" are in fact artificial in the sense that they are constituted as real only because people choose to see them as real. Said argued that:

> "...if we agree that all things in history, like history itself, are made by men, then we will appreciate how possible it is for many objects or places or times to be assigned roles and given meanings that acquire objective validity only after the assignments are made ... It is perfectly possible to argue that some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality." (Said 1995: 54)

In Said's influential account of *Orientalism*, he argues that there was no such thing as "the Orient" until the West named it as such and assigned to it a variety of generalised characteristics. The Orient as a space and a population was assumed by science and western society to be "an inert fact of nature" (Said 1995: 4), but was later exposed as a European invention (Said 1995: 1). Western "knowledge" of the Orient tells us more about the West than the Orient, since the West chooses to see the Orient in certain ways. Knowledge, therefore, is no longer seen as an objective reflection of reality but is a social product reflecting social relations. "Knowledge", then, does not objectively reflect an object, but

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[34] Theorists have been expounding the notion that reality and knowledge is socially constructed since Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), and particularly since Max Scheler founded *the Sociology of Knowledge* in the 1920s (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Pile and Thrift (1995: 34) identify the forebears of social constructionism as psychologists like Vygotsky, Luria and Volosinov.

reflects the concerns of the specialist and the social system that produces the knowledge about the object (Said 1995: 45).

Essentialist claims to know human nature or essence is an example, many postmodernists would say, of modernist thinking since it claims a singular truth about humanity (Bauman 1992, Rorty 1989: 6-7). Rorty argues that rather than trying to find the right words to describe the Self, it is more useful to explore the words that create the Self:

> "[I]f we could ever become reconciled to the idea that most of reality is different to our descriptions of it, and that the human self is created by the use of a vocabulary rather than being adequately or inadequately expressed in a vocabulary, then we should at last have assimilated what was true in the Romantic idea that truth is made rather than found. What is true about this claim is just that languages are made rather than found, and that truth is a property of linguistic properties, or sentences." (Rorty 1989: 6-7)

Social objects that appear to have objective reality such as "the Orient", "the West", "the first world", "the third world", "the working class", "Indians", "blacks", "men", "women", "gays", "straights", etc, are now seen as categories created through social processes rather than existing prior to those processes. Reality, therefore, is said to be "discursively constructed".[35] According to Guba and Lincoln,

> Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared amongst many individuals and even across cultures), and depend for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions. (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 110-111)

Thus the focus is not just on the individual but rather on the *engagement between* individuals. Constructionism does not focus "on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind but on the collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes" (Schwandt 1994: 127, also

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[35] For an account of social constructionist approaches to race within geography since the mid-1980s, see Bonnett (1996: 872).

see Wilton 1998: 175). Constructionism emphasises the role of social interaction, and language as the medium of that interaction. The production of such understandings does not occur within the individual alone but occurs in the space between the individual and the external world (Kvale 1996: 44, Pile and Thrift 1995: 34).

4.3 Philosophical Underpinnings of Research Methods in the "New" Cultural Geography

As described in Chapter Two, traditional cultural geography theorised culture as a 'thing' rather than a process (Mitchell, 1999 and Shurmer-Smith and Hannam, 1994). Duncan (1980: 194-6 cited in Mitchell, 1999) argued that superorganicism, which encapsulates the traditional view of "culture", erased the role of individuals in society, reducing them to automatons acting out the dictates of an independent force, called culture. The "new" Cultural Geography approach suggests that culture is socially constructed and not an inert fact independent of human will.

Comparatively, the traditional cultural geography method would have entailed looking at the *impact* of a particular culture in a particular setting, or as a product. However the new cultural geography, according to Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994:216),

> "...is disinclined to believe that culture has a form, or to assume that there is anything which is prior to culture - culture is everything we can experience. The economy is cultural, politics is cultural, and nature is cultural."

Due to the postmodern and poststructuralist turn in the social sciences the old concept of culture has certainly been abandoned and therefore the impact of the New Cultural Geography on method is undeniable. If we understand culture as itself not a given, defineable object with boundaries, then this has implications for the study at hand. The focus of this study is on the representational practices of Indians in the public cultural sphere, mediated through practices associated with, for example, religion and the media. Clearly, how I understood culture is of

crucial importance to the method I employ. Within this framework, the issue of representation becomes crucial.

The following section of the chapter will explore the effects of postmodernism and poststructuralism on methodology. While the two philosophies are dealt with separately, there exists overlap between them, since both theoretical discourses share a critique of the representations of knowledge. Their common argument is that all knowledge is socially constructed. Even the research that is undertaken in the empirical world and written about is socially constructed, hence the "crisis of representation.

4.3.1 Postmodern Method and the "Crisis of Representation" in Geography

One of the main influences of postmodernism on the social sciences has been to question the possibility of attaining objective knowledge of underlying structures and realities (Rosenau, 1992). The new cultural geography problematises description and representation (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987 and Gregory and Ley, 1988), a relatively new development in geography (Duncan and Ley, 1993). This challenge to the accurate representation of reality is illustrated by recent interrogations of mapping practice.

Traditionally mapping was viewed as a tool to produce an accurate representation of reality, however postmodernism problematises this assumption, as *there is no accurate representation of reality*. Through deconstruction, which urges us to read between the lines of the map, as well as through discourse analysis (discussed later), we find that the map is not an impartial representation of reality but is located within and produced through power relations. Duncan and Ley (1993) argue that far from the map providing an accurate representation of reality; it is usually produced by white, male elite which orders the world that it sees – an elite whose observation and classificatory systems provide the rules of representation.

This questioning of the impartiality of mapping provides a focus for the debates about the nature of representation in cultural geography. Until recently the question of how we should represent the world has largely been taken for granted. Scholars have mainly tried to grapple with how best to produce an accurate representation of reality, that is, "mimetic representation".

The influence of "mimetic representation" on cultural geography has been substantial, and this was reinforced by positivist or descriptive social science. The dominant mode of analysis in traditional cultural geography around the 1950s was to undertake "descriptive fieldwork", which entailed providing accurate observations of the world, empty of theorising. Methods in cultural geography entailed describing the different cultures in the world (as in the *National Geographic* approach). Geography was not the only discipline that was influenced by descriptive social science: anthropology too took to describing the different cultures of the world.

With the linguistic and postmodern turn, there have been calls to revisit the nature of representation deployed in geography. Rabinow (1986, cited in Duncan and Ley) calls for a departure from mimetic theories of representation. There is no "visible world" out there to match our vision against. Mitchell (1999:38) adds quite succinctly that, "… there is no vision without purpose … the innocent eye is blind' for the 'world is already clothed in our systems of representation'". Our representations of the world, as Clifford (1986) argues, cannot be other than "partial truths".

Feminists also problematise the notion of "objectivity". This quest for objectivity, feminists have argued, is a deeply Western male preoccupation. Haraway (1996) uses insights from the feminist critique of science to argue that all knowledge is situated and necessarily a partial perspective. She argues that vision is not a passive biological practice but an *enabling* practice, which must take account of

the technological and political contexts of seeing. Haraway takes her attack on mimesis further by concluding that she:

> "... would like a doctrine of embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects: feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges". (Haraway, 1996: 111)

The fundamental difference between traditional cultural geography and the new cultural geography is that the former is committed to theory-free empiricism and the latter is committed to theory-laden interpretation (Duncan and Ley, 1993). This means that empirical material was seen as an "objective" and "accurate" representation of reality. This can no longer be sustained.

4.3.2   Poststructuralist Method and the New Cultural Geography

Interest in postmodernism and especially poststructuralism has seen a growing concern with the role of language or discourse in social processes. Berger and Luckmann (1966: 36) suggested some years ago that language is central: language has the power to mark "the coordinates of my life in society and fill that life with meaningful objects". Poststructuralists believe that all meaning resides in "intertextuality", the relationship of the text to past texts and to nonliterary text and codes, and they reject the traditional Western (male?) insistence on a single correct reading of a text.

Poststructuralism, then, is a movement largely defined by its critical attitude to language. Eagleton (1983) calls the earlier view of language, *naïve realism*. Here, "words are felt to link up with their thoughts or objects in essentially right and incontrovertible ways" (Eagleton, 1983: 134). Within naïve realism, language was unproblematic, as a word could be seen as the natural given correlate of an object or idea. In effect naïve realism meant that language provided a mirror view of reality.

However through the philosophy of poststructuralism the relationship between words and things was problematised.[36] Wittgenstein recognised that the meaning of words was not tied to objects in the world that their meaning at times was independent of the things that they sought to describe. He termed this problem, "the language game", where, "... for ordinary language ... (analysis of) language came from the context of use rather than reference to an object" (Barnes and Gregory, 1999: 138).

Current philosophy has undergone a linguistic turn (Kvale, 1996). Geographers ignored these critical approaches to language until the mid-1980s (Barnes and Gregory, 1999). It was the work of Gunnar Olsson that marked geography's turn towards a critical look at language. In Olsson's book, *Birds in Egg* (cited in Olsson and Gale, 1979) she took a critical look at language. She argued that "...human geography's models say far more about the language that they written in, than the things that are written about" (Barnes and Duncan, 1999: 140). Furthermore Olson argued that the kind of vocabulary that is used can have political consequences. Her task then was to, "... experiment with words, to be the jester and the poet, to pull and stretch language in new ways so as to reveal and partially overcome its rigidities, biases, and silences, and in so doing head off unsavoury consequences" (Barnes and Duncan, 1999: 140).

Foucault also argued that language has the ability to constitute reality (Fairclough, 1992: 36, 39, Lagopoulos 1993: 257). Foucault theorised that discourse does not merely refer to objects and subjects but it constitutes and transforms them by constructing meanings around them (Fairclough 1992: 41). Further, statements are not merely authored by speakers, but statements position and act on subjects (Fairclough 1992: 43). Therefore, not only do *people use language* to interpret the world, but *discourse acts on people*, and is seen to have constructive effects on

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[36] As far back as the fifth century BC the Greek sophists argued that words could have a power of their own, that was independent of the thing that they represented (Barnes and Gregory, 1999).

social identities, social relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1992: 64). For Foucault, discourse gains agency of its own, thereby decentering the subject:

> "The focus on language shifts attention away from the notion of an objective reality, as well as away from the individual s no longer a unique self who uses language to describe an objective world or to express itself; it is the structures of language that speak through the person". (Kvale 1996: 43)

It is important to note, in passing, that Foucault's transfer of agency from the subject to discourse has recently been criticized for neglecting the agency of the individual. Pile and Thrift (1995: 23) also refer to a revitalization of interest in agency which is associated with dissatisfaction amongst some social researchers with the extreme poststructuralist interpretation that subjectivities are merely the effects of discourse.

Overall, though, the basic point taken from the poststructuralist linguistic turn is that identities do not have objective reality, but have to be seen as subjectively constituted through language. According to Keith and Cross,

> "...core concepts – individuality, ethnicity, race, family, community, state – must not be reified, turned into immutable objects which can be subjected to microscopic scrutiny ... we must focus instead on the context in which these concepts are used to understand not only their meaning or analytical value, but also the work they perform in the reproduction of social relations of inequality." (Keith and Cross 1993: 29)

Extending this notion, writers argue that communities are "imagined". (See Chapter Two). The notion of "imagined communities" was popularised by Anderson (1991), who pointed out that although inhabitants of a nation will never meet each other, many consider themselves as belonging to a common community (1991: 3, also see Harvey 1996: 99). To some extent, therefore, nations should be understood as "imagined" and senses of nationalism are "cultural artifacts", with

particular origins and meanings. Nations do not have objective reality independent from their cultural and discursive context.[37]

Similarly the racial and ethnic signifier although socially constructed, continues to carry with it importance in society. Race must be confronted as a creation of society rather than an *inert characteristic* of society, as Frankenberg explains:

> "I found most useful those analyses that view race as a socially constructed rather than inherently meaningful category, one linked to relations of power and processes of struggle and one whose meaning changes over time. Race, like gender, is 'real' in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals' sense of self, experiences, and life chances. In asserting that race and racial difference are socially constructed, I do not minimize their social and political reality, but rather insist that their reality is, precisely, social and political rather than inherent or static" (Frankenberg 1993: 11).

This dissertation understands race as having a basis in nothing other than racial discourses. That is, race is understood as socially constructed and therefore does not have meaning other than that. Race is not an inert or static fact but rather a social and political construction. The insight that reality is constructed in language has crucial implications for this study, as the interview/text is the qualitative material that forms the basis of this study. How we try and understand what the individuals in this study are saying though the interview will then become crucial and substantive forms of analysis.

A few specific approaches within poststructuralist thought are worth briefly mentioning here.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics[38], another approach within poststructuralist thought that also critically appraises language, means "to interpret" and is a philosophy that

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[37] Interestingly, South African Indians identify themselves as Indian, although this claiming of an Indian-ness predates the existence of India as a nation.

concerns itself with knowing how people understand (Blaikie, 1993: 28 cited in Ballard, 2002). Although hermeneutics was originally strictly concerned with the interpretation of texts, it later began to be applied to interpreting any form of language, including speech. In fact Ricoeur (1971, cited in Barnes and Duncan, 1999) suggests that virtually anything in the social world could be treated as an interpretable text.

Poststructuralism and Psychoanalysis

For Jacques Lacan[39], the unconscious is structured like a language. Lacan argues that language is the condition for the unconscious, that is, it creates and gives rise to the unconscious. He argues that, "...there is no subject independent of language" (Sarup, 1993:10). Like conscious discourse (speech), the formations of the unconscious (dreams, etc) are saying something quite different from what they appear to say. Sarup (1993) illustrates this point through a description. She suggests that conscious discourse is rather like those manuscripts where a first text has been rubbed out and covered by a second. In such a manuscript the first text can still be glimpsed through the gaps in the second and therefore the true speech (the unconscious) breaks through, usually in a veiled and incomprehensible form. Lacan suggests that due to human beings' metaphoric ability[40], words convey multiple meanings and are used to signify something quite different from their concrete meaning.

Semiology

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[38] Hermeneutics originated with the exegesis of biblical texts. Originally it was thought that only God's word could be hermeneutically interpreted, but it was gradually recognised that all kinds of texts, both written and non-written could be analysed (Barnes and Gregory, 1999).

[39] Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, was originally trained as a psychiatrist, and in the 1930s and 40s worked with psychotic patients; he began in the 1950s to develop his own version of psychoanalysis, based on the ideas articulated in structuralist linguistics and anthropology. Lacan reinterprets Freud in light of structuralist and post-structuralist theories, turning psychoanalysis from an essentially humanist philosophy or theory into a post-structuralist one.

[40] He bases this on Freud's account of the two main mechanisms of unconscious processes, condensation and displacement. Both are essentially linguistic phenomena, where meaning is either condensed (in metaphor) or displaced (in metonymy). Lacan notes that Freud's dream analyses, and most of his analyses of the unconscious symbolism used by his patients, depend on word-play--on puns, associations, etc. that are chiefly *verbal.*

Semiology,[41] another approach to language analysis, shares with poststructuralism a critique of the structuralist[42] approach to language. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss Linguist, advanced the semiology approach. Saussure distinguished between the *signifier*, the sound or image, and the *signified*, the meaning. For example the sound image made by the word apple is the "signifier" and the concept of an apple is the "signified". The structural relationship between the signifier and the signified make up a linguistic sign and language is made up of these. Saussure argued for the possibility of anchoring particular signifiers to particular signifieds in order to form a linguistic sign. For him, the balance between the signifier and the signified is precarious (Sarup, 1993).

Lacan, on the other hand argues that meaning only emerges through discourse.[43] In his view of language a signifier always signifies another signifier and therefore there is no natural link between signifier and signified. Thus there exists no unequivocal meaning between the two concepts.[44] So where Saussure talked about the relations between signifier and signified, which form a sign, and insisted that the structure of language is the negative relation among signs (one sign is what it is because it is not another sign), Lacan focuses on relations between signifiers alone. The elements in the unconscious - wishes, desires, images - all form signifiers (and they are usually expressed in verbal terms), and these signifiers form a "signifying chain", that is one signifier has meaning only because it is not

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[41] Semiology emerged at the beginning of the 20th century with the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure. (Sarup, 1993)

[42] Poststructuralism grew out of structuralism. Structuralism emphasised language determinism (Sarup, 1993)

[43] In terms of psychoanalytic theory, Lacan repudiated psychological reductionism. For example, he argued against 'madness' having organic causes. He said that 'madness' was a discourse that needed to be understood. In addition he argued that, " ... biology is always interpreted by the human subject, refracted through language, that there is no such thing as 'the body' before language." (Sarup, 1993, p. 12). By understanding that all descriptions, whether about the body or otherwise are linked to the discourse, he wanted to expose how discourse set the rules of engagement.

[44] Lacan relates the following story: A train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister are seated in acompartment face to face next the window through which the buildings along the station platform can be seen passing as the train pulls to a stop. 'Look' says the brother, 'We are at the Ladies', 'Idiot' replies his sister, 'Can't you see we are at the Gentlemen's' (Sarup, 1993, p. 12). Through each one sitting on one side of the compartment or the other, each one is placed in a structure and as such is unable to see the other structure. Therefore Lacan (Sarup, 1993) seems to be saying that we are all seated on one side of the compartment and there is no other way of seeing. The blindness imposed by our discourse means that we are unable to see the discourse that we are placed in or the other's discourse.

some other signifier. For Lacan, there are no signifieds; there is nothing that a signifier ultimately refers to.

Saussure's tradition of semiotics was particularly influential in promoting the idea that language was not a natural reflection of reality (Alasuutari 1995: 29, Silverman 1993: 71). According to semiotics, a word for an object (signified) is just a set of sounds that has nothing to do with the object. The word only conveys *meaning* (signifier) within a broader system of language. Language turns our environments into something with abstract meaning, in that "the environment we perceive around us can be seen as a series of continua that the language system divides into meaningful parts and relationships between the terms are used in identifying those parts" (Alasuutari 1995: 29). Language, therefore, helps people to establish boundaries between categories that may otherwise be indistinct. It is both differential and relational in that each naming or signification of an object relies on distinctions from, and relations to, other objects (Lagopoulos 1993: 258).

Although its familiarity makes it seem transparent to us, language is recognised as more than a medium of communication and is inextricably associated with thinking, reasoning and perception. Thus:

> "... texts do not merely 'reflect or mirror' objects, events and categories pre-existing in the social and natural world. Rather, they actually 'construct' a version of those things. They do not just describe things; they 'do' things. Being active, they have social and political implications. (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 6)

4.3.3 Implications: Discourse, Deconstruction and Metaphor

Thus far this section has looked at how meaning emerges through discourse. But I have not looked at what discourse actually entails. When the poststructuralist philosophy actually entered geography in the mid-1980s it brought with it two central concepts, discourse and deconstruction.

Philip (1985: 69) defines discourse as "... a system of possibility for knowledge."

Barnes and Gregory (1997: 472, cited in Robinson, 1994) propose that:

> "... in everyday language, 'discourse' usually means simply 'speech' or 'language' and, by extension, 'text': but in the late twentieth century it has also come to have a more specialised, academic meaning derived from post-structuralism. 'Discourse' in this second sense implies a mobile network of concepts, statements and practices that is intimately involved in the production of particular knowledges."

Discourses are part of day-to-day life where they advance particular views of the world.

A discourse then is defined by a set of rules that provides the framework for the existence of that set of knowledge practices. These frameworks of knowledge contain particular narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices that are relevant to them (Barnes and Duncan, 1992). Within discourses, words may have different connotations as the signifiers within that discourse may have no natural connections with their signifieds. Put differently, the relation between the signifiers and their signifieds are *socially constructed.*

Discourses[45] provide a framework for understanding the world, as they are practices of signification (Barnes and Duncan, 1992). These rules then permit what statements can and cannot be made. Then the question is to discover, as Foucault suggested,

> "...what rules permit certain statements to be made; what rules order these statements; what rules permit us to identify some statements as true and others as false; what rules allow the construction of a map, model or classificatory system ... what rules are revealed when a object of discourse is modified or transformed ... Whenever a set of rules of these kinds can be identified, we are dealing with a discursive formation or discourse." (Philip, 1985 cited in Harley, 1996: 157).

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[45] See Harley (1993, cited in Barnes and Duncan) for the clearest explication of discourse analysis in mapping. Harley (1993) argues that cartography is a discourse that when deconstructed reveals the power relations embedded within it.

Foucault, of course, later revised his conception of discourse from free-floating to situated within power relations.

A discourse, then, represents a limit to what can be said about a particular reality and as such becomes enabling as well as constraining. In addition a discourse also plays a naturalising function, naturalising certain aspects of social life as the norm. But although they are seen as fixed and stable, through their embeddedness in power relations, discourses are subject to negotiation. Roland Barthes (1987: 200) notes that, "... discourse (discursivity) moves in its historical impetus through clashes. A new discourse can only emerge as the paradox which goes against ... the surrounding or preceding doxa."

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is the critical analysis of speech, conversation, narratives, anecdotes and dialogue (Robinson, 1998). It takes place within the understanding, described above, that language does not provide a mirror view of reality. A clear example of how discourse analysis has been used can be found in Potter and Wetherell (1992). Potter and Wetherell (1992) use social psychological tools[46] to map the language of racism amongst white New Zealanders and Maori New Zealanders. In their investigation they focus on conversations or narrative, although they argue that racism is not simply a matter of linguistic practice. Their overall aim is to consider, "...the ways in which a society gives voice to racism and how forms of discourse institute, solidify, change, create and reproduce social formations" (Potter and Wetherell, 1992: 3).

In order to do this, Potter and Wetherell place issues of racism within three themes, viz, reality, society and identity. These themes provide the framework

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[46] Potter and Wetherell (1992) argue that since discourse analysis utilises psychological tools, such as justification, blaming, etc to justify certain actions, it should be viewed as a profoundly social psychological activity.

that guides the analysis of racist discourse in their book. They argue that discourse analysis is not just about how to read words but also to derive a method for that reading. According to Potter and Wetherell (1992), discourse then becomes a *medium*, which mainly reflects pre-existing psychological and social realities. Therefore discourse is actively constitutive of social and psychological processes. And the social and psychological fields is defined and articulated through discourse. As Potter and Wetherell (1987: 102) explain:

> "...the main object of the critical movement has been to displace attention from the self-as-entity and focus on the methods of constructing self. That is, the question becomes not what is the true nature of the self, but how is the self talked about, how is it theorised in discourse ... It is suggested that methods of making sense are the key to any kind of explanation of the self, as people's sense of themselves is in fact a conglomerate of these methods, produced through talking and theorizing. There is not 'one' self waiting to be discovered or uncovered but a multitude of selves found in different kinds of linguistic practices articulated now, in the past, historically and cross-culturally.'

This dissertation too undertakes "discourse analysis" as the key method of interpretation of interviews and other forms of text. Discourse is seen as constitutive of the social and psychological realms and therefore it will provide the medium to engage with those issues.

Deconstruction

The notion of deconstruction was formulated as a critique of logocentricism. Logocentricism is defined as the belief in an ordered world. It is a Western philosophy that adheres to the belief that there is a truth or an essence that is a foundation of all our beliefs. Deconstruction, then, emphasizes the instability of language and of reality. Deconstruction[47] will be the key method employed in the textual interpretation to follow.

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[47] Deconstruction was regarded as one of the most important intellectual movements in France and America in the 1960s. It is essentially post-phenomological and poststructural (Sarup, 1993)

Derrida is the most famous scholar associated with deconstruction. The critical component of Derrida's deconstruction is the instability of language. An important concept here is *sous rature*, that is a term usually translated as "under erasure". According to Sarup (1993), to place a word under *sous rature* is to write a word, then cross it out and then print both word and deletion. This concept Derrida derives from Heidegger, who often crossed out the word Being (like this: ~~Being~~) but he let both the deletion and word stand because the word was inadequate yet necessary. According to Sarup (1993: 12) Heidegger felt that "... Being cannot be contained by, is always prior to, indeed transcends signification."

Derrida uses this concept of *sous rature* to critically analyse language. Derrida disapproves of Saussure's model of language, arguing that there is no one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified, that is between word and thought - they never become one. Due to the instability of language, Derrida argues that the signifiers and signified are always breaking apart and reattaching to form new combinations. For Derrida, "...when we read a sign, meaning is not immediately clear to us. Meaning is continually moving along on a chain of signifiers, and we cannot be precise about its exact location, because it is never tied to one sign." (Sarup, 1993: 33).

Derrida (in Sarup, 1993) explains that the sign cannot be taken as a homogenous unit between the signifier and the signified. Therefore the sign must be studied "under erasure", always inhabited by another sign. Derrida goes on to argue that language is a temporal process, for when one reads a sentence, meaning only emerges at the end of the sentence. Therefore all the words in the sentence contain traces of other words, which that sign has excluded in order to be itself. Therefore meaning will always be different in different contexts. As Eagleton explains (cited in Sarup, 1993:34):

> " ... Nothing is ever fully present in signs. It is an illusion for me to believe that I can ever be fully present to you in what I say or write,

because to use signs at all entails my meaning being always somehow dispersed, divided and never quite at one with itself. Not only my meaning, indeed, but I myself: since language is something I am made out of, rather than a convenient tool I use, the whole idea that I am a stable, unified identity must also be a fiction."

This method of deconstruction developed by Derrida can be defined as, "... a method of reading a text so closely that the author's conceptual distinctions on which the text relies are shown to fail on account of the inconsistence and paradoxical use made of these very concepts within the text as a whole." (Sarup,1993: 34). Deconstruction aims to reveal the instability of language within the text.

In addition Norris (1987: 19) notes that deconstruction is about noticing contradiction:

> "...deconstruction is the vigilant seeking-out of those 'aporias', blind spots or moments of self-contradiction where a text involuntarily betrays the tension between rhetoric and logic, between what it manifestly *means to say* and what it is nonetheless *constrained to mean.* To 'deconstruct' a piece of writing is therefore to operate a kind of strategic reversal, seizing on precisely those unregarded details (casual metaphors, footnotes, incidental turns of argument) which are always, and necessarily, passed over by interpreters of a more orthodox persuasion. For it is here, in the margins of the text - the 'margins', that is, as defined by a powerful normative consensus - that deconstruction discovers those same unsettling forces at work.'

This is similar to Harley's formative work (cited Barnes and Duncan, 1992) where he deconstructs cartography to show how the text (map) is deeply embedded in power relations and does not provide a neutral or objective representation of reality. Through reading between the "lines of the map", Harley uncovers the contradictions inherent in the map, such that maps far from being, "... transparent opening[s] to the world," are but "a particular human way ... of looking at the world." (Blocker, 1979: 43 cited in Barnes and Duncan: 233). Harley is able to show how mapping is produced and reproduced within the cultural discourse of

science. Although mapping has no linguistic rules as such, similar deconstructive tools can be brought to bear as in the case of language.

Metaphor

There has also been recent interest in human geography in the role of metaphors in textual analysis. Metaphors again confound the "mimetic desire" - that is, the desire to produce an accurate representation of reality. This is because they often work to decouple words and things.

Pratt examines the concept of metaphor in her article, "Spatial Metaphors and Speaking Positions" (cited in Barnes and Duncan, 1992). Here Pratt problematises spatial metaphors that are currently in vogue such as borderlands, marginality, etc that is used to describe speaking positions. An example is the way in which Gayatri Spivak employs the metaphor of travel to indicate her social position:

> "As far as I can tell, one is always on the run and it seems I haven't really had a home base - and this may have been good for me. I think it's important for people not to feel rooted in one place. So wherever I am I feel I'm on the run in some way." (1990: 37)

Pratt argues that the spatial metaphor of "being on the run" does not adequately capture Spivak's speaking position and she cautions that we should be careful of using spatial metaphors so freely. In her article she explains that metaphors can liberate as well as cloud and confuse descriptions of speaking positions.

Metaphors can however act as clues to uncover discourse. Harley argues that in mapping, science has become a metaphor of conquest. Exact instrumentation, surveying etc are all said to produce an accurate map. But hidden in the map, are social relations of bourgeoisie society, European conquests and colonisation. The way the map was drawn indicated landed property rights and social relations of conquest. So although the map was drawn using mathematical models and other scientific criteria, the metaphor of conquest was still prevalent. The discourse of

science camouflaged the power relations of conquest, only evident through deconstruction of the map.

Through a discussion about language I have shown that philosophers and theorists from poststructuralism and postmodernism argue that language cannot be a mirror of reality. I have shown how the problematic of representation has become key to methodologies that question the notion that the "mimetic desire" can ever be realised.

4.3.4 Implications: Reflexivity and Postcolonial Positionality

Within the new cultural geography, the problematic of "reflexivity" has also become important. It is increasingly argued that the researcher and the researched play a crucial role in the formation of knowledge. Due to the greater use of qualitative methods in social science studies, there is a growing acknowledgement of the subjective nature of research (Clifford, 1983, 1986). This has resulted in a greater emphasis on bringing oneself into the research process and into the accounts of that process (Cohen, 1999, Hall, 1990 and Probyn, 1983).

However while there is general acknowledgment that the researcher affects the research process, there is less appreciation that this is a two-way relationship - that not only does the researcher affect the research process but that they are also affected by that process. Widdowfield (2000) argues that emotions also play a crucial role in the research process. Understanding emotions, Widdowfield (2000) argues, can provide a better understanding of the work done, as this forms an important part of the creation of (situated) knowledge. Thus there are a number of other factors that need to be considered during the research process.

Mcdowell (1992: 409) notes that, "...we must recognise and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participants." A researcher's

positionality, in terms of race, nationality, age, sexuality, social and economic status and gender may influence the data collected and thus knowledge production (Rose, 1997). Robinson (1994) argues that besides the obvious positionalities, the disciplinary location, physical location during research, political persuasion and personality should also be considered.

In terms of my experience during interviewing I found that the religion I subscribe to also played a role during the interview process, since the research I was undertaking was largely in the world of Hinduism. As a Christian and being identified as such through a European name, I felt that respondents' responses to issues of Hindu fundamentalism were often diluted. For instance when I attended a Vishwa Hindu Parishad meeting I dressed in Indian dress, so that I would be recognised as Hindu. I was of course hoping to bypass tendencies of respondents to less than forthcoming with me.

Kamal Visweswaran (1994: 101-106) states that in addition to "fieldwork", the anthropologist also needs to do "homework", a sort of "anthropology in reverse." This means questioning the process by which she/he came to writing about culture, that is, questioning all aspects of their positionality. This is an extension of Elspeth Probyn's concern with "thinking through the self." (Probyn, 1996) Many geographers have also engaged in self-reflection as a response to the demand that we refute ideas of "universal knowledge". By engaging in self-reflection they acknowledge the particularities through which the geographies they write are produced. Nast (1994: 59) argues that "we need to listen, contextualise and admit to the power we bring to bear as multiply-positioned authors of research projects". This is a "process of self-discovery" (England, 1994: 82) a search for a "conscious awareness of the situatedness of our knowledge" (Katz, 1992: 498).

In terms of my own self-reflection, I found that since I was Indian and my interviewees were of the same racially defined group, I understood the issues they were expressing. For instance on issues of affirmative action I myself was reflecting on the way companies manage their affirmative action policies and at times feeling unfairly discriminated against. In addition, during the course of this research, my brother was refused entry to the University of Natal's Medical School although he had done extremely well. This was based on the new racial quota system that was introduced into the Medical School at the time. Thus I was facing issues common to other South African Indians, forcing me to self-reflect on issues as well.

Rose (1997) argues that we need to situate our geographical knowledge. This call to consciously speak about our positioning also comes from postcolonial writing. In an article that investigates the dynamics of research with white women interviewing "others", in this case Indians, Robinson (cited in Blunt and Rose, 1994) follows Spivak in calling for a method that involves "speaking with" the researched, as opposed to speaking for or to them. She cites Mabel Palmer and her research on Indian women in South Africa, where although Palmer "othered" the researched in her work, there were also traces of engagement with the "other". This is a response to what Bhabha (1992: 58) calls for:

> "a more dialogic process that attempts to track the processes of displacement and realignment that are already at work, constructing something different and hybrid from the encounter: a third space that does not simply revise or invert the dualities, but revalues the ideological bases of division and difference."

This postcolonial position is that of the hybrid subject. In a colonial and apartheid context, dichotomous subject positions abound, that is: "I am Black and you are White" subject positions or "I am Indian and you are White", etc. However in a postcolonial context, "colonized and ex-colonized people have been inextricably entwined in the subjectivities of the colonizers, have inhabited the 'in-between spaces' that cross-cultural contact - even the most violent and segregating kind,

such as apartheid - creates (Robinson, 218 cited in Blunt and Rose, 1994). Therefore in this postcolonial context, the model of "speaking with" and engaging with the researched offers the most productive approach.

Also interesting is Robinson's critical analysis of *A Portrait of South African Indians* by Fatima Meer (1969). Here Fatima Meer is the "privileged insider" who documents Indian culture. In the preface to her book, Meer argues that she documents her personal experiences of Indian culture. But here again Robinson argues that Meer unconsciously constitutes Indians as "other" and "exotic" in her work. Gayatri Spivak[48] argues that we need to critically look at how we represent 'others'. Spivak (1987) in "Can the Subaltern speak?" argues that in her simultaneous position as an "elite" "intellectual" and as a "Third-world woman, Bengali exile", that she is complicit in the production of the very social formation (that is imperialism and colonialism) that she opposes. Ironically, she argues, postcolonial studies could serve simply to reinscribe neo-colonial domination.

The crucial question then is, does postcolonialism as a discourse that classifies and surveys the East, reinscribe it in the same measure as the actual modes of colonial dominance it seeks to dismantle? Spivak argues that "postcolonial intellectuals [must] learn that their privilege is their loss (Ashcroft, et al, 1995: 28). In "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak encourages but also criticizes the efforts of the subaltern studies group, a project led by Ranajit Guha that has reappropriated Gramsci's term "subaltern" (meaning the economically dispossessed) in order to locate and re-establish a "voice" or collective locus of agency in postcolonial India. Although Spivak acknowledges the "epistemic violence" done upon Indian subalterns, she suggests that any attempt from the outside to ameliorate their condition by granting them collective speech invariably will encounter the many problems. Firstly there is the assumption that

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[48] It was in 1976 when Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak published *Of Grammatology* - an English translation of Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (1967) – that she introduced herself as a radical postcolonial critic.

"subalterns" are culturally homogenous. Secondly there is the idea that western intellectuals will and can only speak for the "subaltern" group. Thus the "subaltern" group do not the "authority" to speak for themselves. As Spivak argues, by speaking out and reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society.

Spivak uses deconstruction to show that the postcolonial critic's responsibility is to question the assumptions of not only the social formations under scrutiny but also their (her) own critical and institutional allegiances. In an interview with Alfred Arteaga from "Bonding in Difference" (cited in Ashcroft et al, 1995: 28), she states:

> "...Deconstruction does not say there is no subject, there is no truth, there is no history. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth. It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced. That's why deconstruction doesn't say logocentrism is pathology, or metaphysical enclosures are something you can escape. Deconstruction, if one wants a formula, is among other things, a persistent critique of what one cannot not want." (p28)

There is perhaps danger here of too much self-reflexivity on the part of the analyst, leading to a clouding of the wider issue. Cultural studies analysts argue that we need to remember that the speaking position of those we write about is just as complex as our own. Ann Gray (cited in Fuss, 1997) argues that the reflexivity of the analyst can only be "genuine" if it respects the reflexivity of those he/she studies. Further she says, "Whilst I would argue that cultural studies and feminists need to continue towards more sophisticated methods which engage with 'lived culture', those subjects must be allowed to be the knowledgeable and knowing subjects" (Gray cited in Fuss, 1997: 103). The point being made here is that we should not credit those we study with *less* reflexivity than we credit ourselves with, since all speaking positions are problematic.

4.3.5 Conclusion

This section has dealt with numerous issues regarding textual interpretation. The main focus of the debate has been the idea of the creation of a mimetic model of the world, which has been discredited. I have looked at two philosophies, viz postmodernism and poststructuralism, that engage with these issues of representation.

Clearly mimesis does not sit easily with newer critiques of textual interpretation. Postmodernists have engaged in debate around the "crisis of representation". As Gregory and Walford (1989: 2) argue, "our texts are not mirrors which we hold up to the world, reflecting its shapes and structures immediately and without distortion. They are, instead, creatures of our own making, though their making is not of our own choosing". Poststructuralists agree that language does not mirror reality; therefore texts will not provide an accurate interpretation of reality. Clearly then, texts in whatever form - in this case transcripts derived from interviews, radio talk shows and newspapers - cannot ever provide an accurate representation of reality.

In addition issues of reflexivity play a crucial role in the research process, especially in a postcolonial context. The researcher cannot speak for the researched. He/she is located within certain positionalities and therefore is not in a position of authority to speak for the researched.

4.4   The Fieldwork Process

4.4.1   Sources of Primary Data

Primary material for this thesis was mostly collected during the period 1999 to 2001, although unfolding events subsequent to 2001 have also been incorporated into the study where appropriate. Initially the study arose out of the observation that there appeared to be renewed interest in questions around "being Indian" in

South Africa, a concern reflected in and encouraged by the media.[49] Newspaper articles abounded both in the local and national newspapers - particularly KwaZulu-Natal-based "Indian" newspapers such as *The Post* - and the place of such an ethnic group in the new South Africa was hotly debated in radio shows, conferences, plays, and religious forums.

As Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 14) state, "strategies of inquiry ... put paradigms of interpretation into motion ... and connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analysing empirical materials." In this case, it was decided that the most appropriate approach would be to capture and study examples of discourse about Indian identity and culture, in particular discourse articulated in the public arena and thus attempting to shape the thinking of people about their "place" in South Africa and the world. I fully anticipated that contestation and complexity would characterize these representations, and this was indeed the case.

As the previous section has shown, language does not provide a mirror view of reality. Rather language is understood as a way of understanding and indeed constructing reality in relation to the social context. According to Alasuutari (1995), responses are not most appropriately treated as "results", but rather as opportunities for exploring the process of the systems of meaning used by participants to produce the response (Ballard, 2003). The primary material then, consists of "samples of discourse". Here discourse is understood as the process of people using language to draw on systems of meaning in order to make their environment intelligible to themselves and in so doing to construct the nature of these environments.

The gathering of primary material then required collation of "samples of discourse". These collected samples make up what Fairclough (1992: 226) calls "the corpus". In compiling the "corpus", the researcher draws from the wider

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[49] The post-1994 interest in ethnic identity has not only become crucial to Indians but also to other "minority" groups in the new South Africa (e.g. the Coloured community).

population of samples, or the "archive", defined as the "totality of discursive practice, either recorded past practice", that falls within the domain of the research project" (Fairclough, 1992: 227). This entailed immersing myself in the cultural world of Durban Indians: I became a cultural observer, voraciously devouring any material associated with the Indian way of life.

In the period 1998-2001, I attended political meetings, cultural meetings, religious meetings, conferences, and tuned into casual conversations. I read newspaper articles dealing with Indians in Durban. I conducted intensive, free-ranging, interviews with key individuals who either presented themselves as cultural "mediators" for the Indian community, and/or had intellectual insight into the processes of identity formation and contestation in the post-1994 period. There were six main field strategies:

     i.   Interviews with academics and social observers;

     ii.   Interviews, written discourse and observation of religious organisations and their leaders;

     iii. Surveys of written discourse from the print media;

     iv. Attendance of conferences and plays;

     v.   Monitoring and taping of radio programmes on the topic of Indian identity;

     vi. Structured questionnaire conducted with Indian students at the University of Natal

Before embarking on an analysis of these strategies, it is useful to briefly consider the context of place (The historical context of Indians in South Africa has already been elucidated in detail in Chapter 3). Durban, as a place directly affects the study at hand.

Durban as a context

Many of the people interviewed actually reside in Durban. Specifically this study is not a study of Indians in any other area and cannot claim to draw comparisons

with other Indians in the rest of South Africa. Clearly there are distinctions between communities within Durban as there are distinctions between Indians elsewhere. However the point is that Indians in Durban make up the largest Indian population in South Africa, accounting for 1.1 million Indians. Thus their circumstances are different: these are large and cohesive communities, and it is possible that the debates around Indians and "affirmative action" are more heated than elsewhere due to the high percentage of Indians residing in Durban and the prevailing demographics with other racial groups.

The first indentured labourers from Indian arrived in Durban and they account for the largest Indian population in South Africa. Over 80 per cent of Indians have settled in KwaZulu-Natal, 15 per cent in the former Transvaal and the remainder in the former Cape Province. Durban has been the first 'home' for many Indian South Africans. Mahatma Gandhi himself came to Durban and his bust stands in the middle of a Verulam park, 40 miles north of Durban, "dedicated to the memory of all indentured labourers for their sacrifice and contribution in enriching the lives of all South Africans". Recently there have been moves in the Indian community to erect a monument to commemorate their arrival in South Africa. Clearly then Durban not only served as the port of entry for the indentured labourers but also continues to hold deep sentimental attachment.

In addition there are various "group areas" that Indians reside in and there are variations between them in terms of class. Some of the areas such as Reservoir Hills are higher income Indian areas than, say, Phoenix. To draw out the details of these differences, however, was not the aim of this study, which takes a broader "Durban" view, attempting to capture contested Indian identities emerging out of public discourses and religious discourses at a fairly general level.

While Durban was the site in which most of the material was collected, this study has implications that are not only confined to Durban. Globalisation has impacted on various minority groups throughout the world. Indians are one particular

minority group that has been affected by globalisation. So this study then, while it is context specific, does lend itself to interpretation elsewhere. Of necessity, the analysis draws on discourses of the Indian diaspora. Durban could thus be seen not as a bounded case study, but rather as a setting and a context (Stake, 1994: 14, Ballard, 2003: 50). It is the hope of this study that the analysis generated may be relevant to other minority groups in South Africa and in the rest of the world, although I do recognise the nuances of this particular site.

Interviews with politicians, academics, social commentators, religious leaders, playwrights

> "...[the interview's] purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena." (Kvale,1996: 6).

> '...interviews are particularly suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world.' (Kvale, 1996:103).

This study uses qualitative[50] interviews as an important tool to gather its primary material. There are different types of interviews, including unstructured, in-depth, semi-structured, structured or informal interviews (Robinson and Flowerdew). Unlike questionnaires, interviews take on a conversational format and they are ideally a form of dialogue rather than interrogation. Eyles (1998 cited in Flowerdew, 1997: 111), describes an interview as "a conversation with a purpose."

Interviews are different from surveys and questionnaires, where the researcher sets the agenda and the format and asks the same questions to each respondent to gain uniformity in response. Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, are

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[50] Qualitative methods arose out of the humanistic and cultural turns in geography (see Eyles and Smith, 1988; Ley and Samuels, 1978 and Smith, 1984)

similar to conversations as both the researcher and the researched set the agenda together and an investigation of the various themes can be gained from many different angles. Kvale clearly states that an interview is literally an "inter view", an inter-change of views between two persons speaking about a common theme. This format is important as it allows the expression of the respondent's view in his or her own words. The material generated in this way is rich, detailed and multi-layered, producing a deeper picture than a "questionnaire survey." (Burgess 1984, cited in Flowerdew, 1997: 111).

The interview is not just a passive means of gathering information, but is a social encounter. Kvale argues that interviews should also be seen as conversation. He uses two metaphors to draw out the stance he takes on interviews. He conjures up both a miner and a traveller. A miner, he argues, tries to uncover material that is unpolluted and uncontaminated and therefore the knowledge from such an investigation would be objective facts (derived from a process such as questionnaires). The traveller metaphor, best illustrated through the interview technique, understands research to be a journey. In fact the Latin meaning of conversation is "wandering with". The interview then becomes a process, which could not only lead to new information but may also change the traveller.

The use of the interview as a research technique is not meant to produce an accurate representation of reality. Rather Kvale (1996: 37) argues that interviews facilitate the "social justification of belief". The conversation between the researcher and the researched does not offer a link to the reality that is expressed, but is instead a process of creating and articulating knowledge about that reality. Therefore Kvale (1996: 42) argues that the qualitative research interview is a "construction site of knowledge."

Unlike the questionnaire, the aim of the interview is not to be representative, but rather to draw on the individual's own life experiences. This view has been criticized by positivists. They argue that interviewers bias the responses of the

researched and therefore it cannot be objective. But as has been discussed, there can be no true objectivity in social science research. It is argued that the researcher influences research, either explicitly or implicitly. Stanley and Wise (1993: 157 cited in Flowerdew, 1997: 112), both feminist critics of "objectivity" argue that:

> "... whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings and moods. And all of these influence what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which the research occurs; there is no technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher.'

Sampling

> "Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know." (Kvale, 1996: 101)

It is very difficult to ascertain how many interviews would be adequate for research such as this and the literature reviewed does not really provide a guide. However Kvale (1996) argues that when there is a decreasing amount of new discourse yielded by ongoing interviews, a "saturation point is reached". Kvale (1996: 102) notes that many current interview-based studies range from 5 to 25 interviews. A total of 23 interviews with "cultural mediators" were conducted by the researcher for this study. These interviews, taped and later transcribed, are listed in Table 1 (See Appendix B).

In terms of selecting respondents a two-pronged approach was used. That is, a purposive sampling technique combined with "snowballing" was used. Many respondents were high profile, elite individuals in the community. Through the interview with them, they referred me to other relevant individuals and that created the snowball effect.

Due to the high profile nature of the individuals interviewed, it took me a long time to secure appointments with them. On several occasions, I arrived for an

appointment, only to be turned away because the respondent had been called away, sometimes to court or other work demands. In terms of interviewing politicians, there was one incident where I arrived early for an appointment and had to wait through a whole three hour engagement that the politician had before I could actually speak to them, and then I was turned away because of another appointment that they had. Indeed there were many incidents of this nature.

In addition I kept a close record of relevant articles in the newspaper, especially letters to the editor. Through these letters I could distinguish whom the relevant individuals were to speak to on a particular theme. The more vociferous the letters were, usually the more willing the writer was to speak about his or her opinion.

When I contacted a respondent telephonically, I explained to them the nature of my research, stating clearly my research objectives and the reasons why I had chosen to speak to them. To some it seemed that I should not even venture to speak about such issues: I was told that Indian identity was not contested and that I was stirring up trouble by attempting this topic. In other cases I was praised for my insight. Gradually I became able not to take these comments personally, but rather to see them as part of the discourse in which I was interested and which I was attempting to understand. Some of the selected "cultural mediators" were thus more willing respondents than others, but all interviews were an enriching experience.

In some cases I had to really convince the respondents to participate in the research. Usually the reason was that they felt that Indian issues should not be isolated and that perhaps my research would be perpetuating an Indian stereotype. In other cases it was felt that my approach reflected middle-class concerns and was concerned only with the middle class; that in addition to speaking to professionals I should also speak to the working class. The reason that I did not speak to "the working class" was, firstly, practical: I had a limited time period

available and perhaps as Kvale (1996: 179) says, 1 000 pages of transcript, corresponding to between 30 and 40 hours of interview is generally too much to analyse in a meaningful way. Up until that suggestion I had already done 23 interviews, which translated into approximately 46 hours of interview and that discounts the other primary material that I had collected. This I felt was "saturation point" (Kvale, 1996). But also I felt that my strategy was of value: the study was focused on those intent on articulating Indian cultural concerns and winning identifications in the public sphere, and these actors were no less powerful for being middle-class.

Demographically more men participated in the interview process than women (5 women and 18 men). This is perhaps due to generally men having more time at their disposal, to engage in community matters, than women, and also to the predominance of men in positions of cultural/intellectual/religious authority. Generally the respondents were professional people within the 30 to 60 age group. The interview was arranged at their workplace with the odd exceptions (I met two individuals in their homes and one at a restaurant, at their suggestion.)

Interview Content and Format

The following is a brief description of the general content and basic format of each of the twenty-seven interviews conducted. (See Appendix A for Interview Schedule):

- *Biographical and Professional Information*: I began each interview with questions regarding the person's interest in Indian issues, whether they were a part of a religious organisation and their political affiliation. This was an attempt to contextualise the information that I gained from the respondents.

- *Contemporary Definition of Indian Cultural Identity*: I then proceeded to ask the respondent general questions about Indian culture, how they felt about their South African national identity, Indian languages and sporting affiliations.

- *Indian Responses to and Perceptions of the Transformation Process since 1994*: I then asked each respondent how they felt about the political changes

in South Africa. I then proceeded to ask them about how Indians in general were finding the changes. Here we discussed topical issues currently being dealt with in the media, concerning Indians. Usually I did not have to go into detail about the issues as people were engaging with them through the media (reading, writing, speaking) during the time period of the interviews.

- *Connections to India*: During this discussion, I dealt explicitly with the interviewee's connections to India. Sometimes the discussion revolved around their visits to India and we shared various anecdotes about travelling to India. I then proceeded to ask them whether they would actually move to India and stay there permanently. Finally I tried to get a sense of what they felt made Indians unique and what actually bound them together in the world.

Just as the respondents themselves were carefully chosen, the interview questions were necessarily tailored for each respondent and the conversation was steered in different directions depending on their interests. For example, when interviewing religious leaders, the questions were geared towards understanding their religious point of view, as well as their personal point of view.

Constraints to Interviewing

At the outset I would like to cite and then elaborate on what Dr Ashwin Desai said to me, in response to the research I was doing and the people that I was interviewing:

> "You see I am quite critical of people who are talking to cultural leaders and I think that you must bear that in mind. You know firstly speaking to people like myself, to Prof. Fatima Meer etc and like doing a snap survey. You know there was a study done by a women in University of Natal, Maritzburg, she's this wonderful person but she inferred about political science, and what we have found to our own surprise in a wonderful journey is how do we reach ordinary people and talk about their life and why they are where they are and take those real people and then unpack that." (Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000)

In many interviews that I conducted there was a general sense that I should not be carrying out research on Indian identity since I would be perpetuating Indian-ness. Further Dr Ashwin Desai suggested I should not be speaking to cultural leaders since I would be perpetuating Indian-ness, as well as exacerbating fearfulness and minority identity in a context where, many feel, "Indians" as a racial category have borne the brunt of affirmative action and GEAR policies. However since my study was about how Indian identity was actually being shaped by cultural leaders, culture being understood as embracing the political and economic spheres, all individuals who made representations about Indians in the public sphere were important to my study. From Dr Ashwin Desai and Professor Fatima Meer to Mr Ram Maharaj, all were trying to shape Indian identity, each was articulating a cultural identity discourse, and thus there was a need to examine all of them.

In the beginning it was difficult identifying respondents and setting up appointments. Many were extremely busy and others expressed lack of interest. I did feel in many ways that since they were what you might call 'elite', I was an outsider. I did not belong to their social circle and I found it difficult to gain access into their world. But through attending events and networking I managed to get to the right people and start interviewing.

Some respondents tended to talk freely about the issues at hand and I did not have to speak for lengthy periods, while with others there were occasions that I had to urge the respondent to provide more detail. When respondents tended to "ramble on", sometimes it meant that they did move off the topic at hand and through probing questions I had to steer them to the relevant issues. At times their moving off course in the conversation lent some enriching detail that I may not have gained had I stayed only within the realm of the interview guide.

I felt that I had to explain why I was interested in this particular research from a personal point of view and I related my own biography. At times I found that my

own history had intertwined with theirs. I did learn from one respondent that my great grandfather had taught him Telegu in Darnall. Together we traced my family lineage. At other times I learnt that my grandparents had been part of a history that I was not intimately aware of. I learnt how my late grandmother taught Telegu at a school and many of my elderly uncles were some of the early Indian teachers. There was certainly a history there that I was not aware of. And in many ways that is how I established 'rapport' with the respondents.

The longest interview that I had lasted three hours. Here the problem I had was that the respondent kept bringing up issues that were not relevant to the discussion and steering the conversation was difficult. Also since many of the respondents were male, I felt that as a woman I had to be forthright in my questions, due to the implicit power relations at play. (Much has been written about the dynamics of gender and sexual power relations in the interview process, but this literature cannot be reviewed in detail here). I felt that certain interviews with males were unsettling for me, as I always had to prove myself. I am reminded of one interview where I had to explain to the respondent what I was doing many times before he believed that it was worthy of note. But at the same time I had a similar difficulty with a woman, who felt that I did not know what I was talking about. The implicit relations of power were not merely shaped by male dominance; "elite" dominance was also evident.

Besides the issue of sex, culture and religion also played a role in my interviews. Because of my interest in culture, religious issues, specifically Hindu issues, were unavoidable as these are key mechanisms through which "essentialised" versions of Indian identity are articulated. I was brought up a Christian and although I am Indian, respondents regarded me as Christian by virtue of my surname and first name. So although at times I felt that respondents could be more honest with me because we were of the same ethnicity, at other times I felt like an "outsider" because of other variables at play. When I interviewed a Hindu fundamentalist for instance he felt uncomfortable explaining that a Hindu Renaissance was going

despite the attempts of Christians to convert Hindus. His responses tended to be diluted. Had he been interviewed by a Hindu, he would probably have expressed quite clearly how he felt about Christians.

During one particular interview I was told explicitly to switch my dictaphone off as the respondent refused to have his views recorded. I was forced to take down detailed notes. However the respondent avoided many questions and claimed a superficial understanding of the issues at hand. Clearly the respondent did not want to truly express their views and I felt I was an intrusion. I did try to arrange a follow-up meeting but I was told that the respondent was extremely busy and I was referred to someone else who would be more useful. The respondent that I was referred to provided a very diluted response to the questions and clearly he was prepared for the interview. This interview was more like a questionnaire response than an actual engaging interview. The reason for this is that the matter that was discussed was very sensitive in nature, dealing with Hindu fundamentalism.

Being an Indian South African and interviewing others of that group clearly had many advantages regarding the ease with which views could be expressed, but at times it also meant that people did not explain themselves as clearly as they might have. Some of their thoughts were implied but never expressed and many times I had to make them clarify what they were saying.

Throughout the interviews if a view was expressed that I did not agree with, I allowed the person to express their thoughts without any restrictions. During my interviewing I felt that in some ways I also had to confront my own prejudices. At times if a racist view was expressed, I found myself withdrawing from the conversation. I would still show interest in what the respondent was saying but I would not say a word. When a racist view was being expressed and the respondent looked to me for acknowledgement, I stayed quiet, not wanting to associate myself with such a view.

Radio Talkshows, Political Rallies, Conferences, Cultural Organisation Meetings and Plays

A further key part of my field strategy was to spend time gathering information about what was going on in the Indian community at a public level. I listened to Radio Lotus (an Indian radio station), Radio Phoenix (a community radio station) and Radio Hindvani (a Hindu radio station), to remain aware of interesting and relevant issues. Often I gained interesting information about new organisations and Indian issues that were being dealt with at a public level.

Radio Lotus, for instance ran a talkshow every week day between 2 and 3 pm, and between 7 and 8 pm and listeners were encouraged to call in to express their viewpoints. During these talkshows interesting topics were dealt that were in the domain of my research. I decided to tape these talkshows. But I did realise that these talkshows expressed only a certain view of Indians as only those with access to telephones could call. Dr Ashwin Desai, a leading social commentator, hosted all these talkshows. I found these talkshows very interesting as they providing a lens into what was going on in the Indian community during that time period. Often my interviews with respondents tended to deal with these issues and since they were current I found that the discussions on air lent depth to my understanding of the issues at hand. If for instance my respondents' response to issues were dry and unilluminating, I would be able to draw on the talkshow discussion and then I would gain a more full response.

In addition to radio talkshows, I also attended various conferences, political rallies, meetings, plays and meetings of cultural organisations (See Appendix B, Table 3). All these activities, reflected in Table 3, lent further substance to my understanding of the affairs of the Indian community and their views about themselves. Spending time finding out what was happening at a public level in the Indian community was a valuable exploratory device.

For example, in the run-up to the municipal elections of 1999 I attended various political rallies, such as that of the Minority Front, and hear heard about the issues that affected the Indian community. Although unable to attend the Democratic Alliance political rally, I collected various pamphlets and read their press releases in the community newspapers. During a rally conducted by the global Hindu movement, the VHP, I got a sense of the impact of this movement in Durban. Attending a meeting of the Tamil Coordinating Committee, I tried to get a sense of the Tamils in Durban and Sri Lanka. Clearly the last two at least were aspiring to draw Indian Durbanites into various global movements.

During the Conference of Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (its inaugural conference in South Africa) in 1998, I attended all the sessions and listened to speakers relating issues important to Indians in other parts of the world. The Conference theme was, "Cultural identity, Nation Building and Globalisation". At this preliminary stage I identified individuals that would later be useful to interview.

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (South Africa) Conference was held in Durban in December 2000. The theme of this conference was, "Spiritual Transformation in the New Millennium". Here again attending the conference enabled me to identify individuals useful to speak to. The conference also enabled me to identify issues that were pertinent in the Hindu community, which subsequently added to the content of my interview schedule.

I was unable to attend the Indo-African Seminar in 10 April 2000. While I attempted on numerous occasions to obtain permission to attend, it tended to be elitist, with only certain individuals being invited. I did attend the "Indians in South Africa" conference, hosted by the Institute of Black Research, held on 27 April 2000. The conference was held to address the key issues facing Indians in the new South Africa.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad movement held a rally in Phoenix on 13 August 2000. In order to be accommodated in the rally, I dressed in Indian dress, so I could fit in and appear like everyone else. I did take some photos, although the reel did get damaged and the photos were of poor quality.

On 11 November 2000, I attended a book launch by Dr Ashwin Desai, on his new book, *The Poors of Chatsworth.* This was an unusual book launch, conceived as a night of entertainment provided by Dr Ashwin Desai for the poor people of Chatsworth. Here again I was learning about issues being faced by poor Indians in South Africa.

The "Tamil Co-ordinating Committee of South Africa" held a Tamil Cultural Festival on 26 November 2000. This festival was to celebrate human rights and freedom and also to pay homage to the fallen heroes in Eelam and South Africa. Here again I met with key individuals in the Tamil community, who would later become my research participants.

The four plays that I attended were "Women in Brown", "Out of Bounds", "Mahatma vs Gandhi" and "The Working Class Hero" all dealt with particularly Indian issues, and attending them gave me insight into the Indian community. I was able to interview two of the playwrights, Mr Rajesh Gopie and Mr Ronnie Govender.

Although all these fieldwork strategies may seem ad hoc, they proved insightful exploratory devices into the Indian community. It enabled me to understand some of the key issues pertinent to Indians.

Structured Questionnaire

A further field strategy I utilized was a structured questionnaire administered to Indian undergraduate students at the University of Natal, Durban undertaking courses in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences. (See Appendix D).

The questionnaire contained open-ended and closed-ended questions (See Appendix D). This questionnaire was administered during their practical sessions and I collected the questionnaire at the end of the session. Generally the students came from belonged to a middle class background (the University of Natal fee structure at the time was higher than that of other academic institutions).

The questionnaire provided a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the research (See Appendix D). It was clearly stated that responses were confidential and individuals were not obliged to respond, since it was done on a voluntary basis. Generally the questionnaire was enthusiastically received. The total number of students who participated was 45.

Newspapers

Initially I began scanning all the community newspapers that were available to me. I live in a predominately Indian suburb and I felt that if Indians had any issues to arise, I could pick them up here. The community newspapers that I perused were: *The Rising Sun*, *The Phoenix Tabloid* and *The Indian Opinion* (which later went out of circulation). Most of the articles collected were from the time period 1999-2001.

In addition to community newspapers I also monitored local Durban or KwaZulu-Natal newspapers, in particular *The Post*, *The Leader*, *The Daily News*, *The Sunday Tribune*, and *The Sunday Times*. During 1998-1999 an Indian magazine called *Indigo* came into circulation. This was a glossy magazine that dealt with Indian food, culture and travel. This later went out of publication as well.

Scanning through these newspaper articles I learnt about key issues of concern and I identified key community figures. The Letters to the Editor proved to be a valuable source of primary material, in terms of the discourse that they used to represent these issues. While these letters did not necessarily reflect general opinion, they did represent how certain individuals in the community felt about

particular issues. In some cases a topic was dealt in the paper over several weeks, until the editor decided to close all correspondence on that issue. In addition, *The Post* sent out a reporter every week to speak to individuals about certain topical issues and the paper ran their views every week. (*The Post* has a mainly Indian circulation). This proved to be a useful source of information.

Therefore these letters did point to key issues that people wanted to deal with in a public medium. Newspapers are after all a key part of the system of shared social understanding. Therefore newspaper articles and letters to the editor were used extensively as a source of primary material and were as important as the interview transcripts.

In addition I also looked through the topic files in the Natal Newspapers library on 'affirmative action', 'Racism' and 'Racism in Schools'. Natal Newspapers is the company owning all commercial local newspapers available in Durban including *The Mercury*, *The Daily News*, *The Independent on Saturday*, *The Sunday Independent*, *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Post* and *Ilanga*. I also went to the Durban Documentation Centre located at the University of Durban-Westville to go through articles in *The Leader*, which has a mainly Indian readership. In my newspaper searches I limited my focus to the post-1994 period.[51]

4.4.2 Interpreting Primary Material: Transcription and Coding

Transcription

All the interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone. This allowed me to focus on the interview during the discussion, and I was able to record as much detail as possible. At times I also taped speakers' presentations at conferences to get a synopsis of their work, as well as getting papers from them.

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[51] Interestingly, at one point I myself became part of the newspaper debate through my research. This moment is discussed at the end of this chapter.

I accumulated a large set of audiotapes and I then proceeded to transcribe each one of them. A transcript is not the same thing as the original interview since it includes some details and leaves out others (Kvale, 1996: 165). Ricoeur (1971, cited in Ballard, 2003: 40) notes that transcribed conversations lose many aspects of the actual event. Therefore I kept a record of my assessment of each interview, noting the difficulties and the nuances of each particular one. For instance if a comment was made and it was made explicit that I switch the Dictaphone off, I did so but I made a note of the comment later on.

The purpose of transcribing my interviews was to study the way discourse is structured and therefore transcripts had to transcribed verbatim. The interviewer's speech also had to be transcribed, since it is constitutive of the response (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). It was necessary to have sufficient verbatim detail to conduct discourse analysis (Wooffitt, 1993: 290). All 26 interviews were transcribed, as well as 11 radio talk shows (See Appendix C for an example of a transcribed interview).

Coding

Once the interviews were transcribed, they were coded. Coding is a way of breaking down long conversations into extracts on specific topics. It removes statements from their original context, but this is the result of wanting to identify the specific issues that were raised during the interview (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Before coding an interview I assigned a unique number to the interview, based on the date the interview was conducted. Thus if it was the first interview that I undertook, it was assigned the number one. Thereafter a unique number was assigned to each "speaker-turn", that is to each paragraph in the transcript (See Appendix C). This allowed me to locate the original interview and location of an extract when working with it in a topic file. The interviewees' responses were not

kept confidential except in the case of the structured questionnaire administered to students. Cultural leaders or "mediators" were chosen on the basis of their position in society and therefore their identity was not kept confidential.

Once I had completed transcribing the interviews I read through each one and cut and pasted into different topics that I had identified in the transcripts. Each topic had divergent issues and in some cases responses were duplicated into different topics. For instance, on the topic, "Discourses of Marginalisation", the following themes were contained within this heading:

- Affirmative Action;

    Admission to Educational Institutions

    Access to Employment

- Black Economic Empowerment;
- African Renaissance;
- Crime.

The topic file "Discourses of Marginalisation" contained the above themes that were located on an index in that folder. Relevant extracts of newspaper articles and other relevant primary material were also coded with the titles, dates and page numbers, included in the specific topic files.

Interpretation

The philosophy of the method of interpretation has been discussed in detail in this chapter and will not be repeated in detail here. Briefly, poststructuralism suggests that language constitutes people. Discourse analysis as an approach focuses on the linguistic resources that people draw upon, in order to make sense of the world around them. Potter and Wetherall (1987:35) refer to these as "linguistic repertoires", defined as "a set of descriptive and referential terms which portray beliefs, actions and events in a specific way." Analysis required the identification and understanding of these "linguistic repertoires" within the corpus.

Text features such as metaphors, categorizations, negation and irony, to name but a few are essential features in discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherall, 1987). Categorisation in particular is a key feature of identity construction, since identities are formed through categories, and an attempt was made to understand the way membership categories work in this case. As Potter and Wetherell (1987: 129) explain:

> "The fact that membership categories can be conventionally tied to, or associated with, specific activities and other features, provides people with a powerful resource for making sense of their social worlds. In particular, it allows them to make inferences, or discursive connections to the category membership of the actors. And, conversely, given that they only know a person's membership, they can make a good guess of the things that person is likely to be doing." (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 129).

Thus, through the textual feature "categorization", one is able to identify the types of discourse utilized in the construction of identities. In Chapter Six, I provide a discussion of some of the key discourses that individuals use in their constructions of Indian-ness and I explain how these categories counterpoint with other racial groups. So if Indians as a group are seen as hard-working, others are not. These distinctions are used to construct narratives about the social world and can be very revealing about the constructs of people using them. However, a cautionary note is relevant here, since in some cases particular discourses may seem to suggest that groups of people are racist. It is not the intention of this dissertation to suggest that people are racist, but rather to point to the *racial frameworks* that individuals use.

Writing as an Act of Interpretation

Traditionally scientific research has attempted to present findings as if authorless and thus researchers – even qualitative researchers - tried hard to remove all traces of their subjectivity in the text. This approach Fine (1994: 74) suggests is like performing a "god trick". Such researchers

> "… produce texts through Donna Haraway's (1988) "god trick", presuming to paint the Other from 'nowhere'. Researchers/writers self-consciously carry no voice, body, race, class or gender and no interests in

their texts. Narrators seek to shelter themselves in the text, as if they were transparent."

Traditional qualitative researchers attempted to "edit" themselves out of the text, although these efforts were futile since traces of the authors remained in the text (as the discussion on the crisis of representation has shown). Postmodernism and poststructuralism have shown that there is no objective truth, since all knowledge is socially constructed. Therefore the key is to be "self-conscious" about writing (Cough 1992, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 10). As researchers, postmodernists and poststructuralists suggest that we need to recognize the hyphen in between the other and the self, in the relationship between the researched and the researcher (Fine, 1994: 72):

> "When we opt, as has been the tradition, to simply write about those who have been Othered, we deny the hyphen. Slipping into a contradictory discourse of individualism, personalogic theorizing, and decontextualisation, we inscribe the Other, strain to write out the Self, and refuse to engage the contradictions that litter our texts. When we opt instead to engage in social struggles with those who have been exploited and subjugated, we work with the hyphen, revealing far more about ourselves, and far more about the structures of Othering. Eroding the fixedness of categories, we and they enter and play with the blurred boundaries that proliferate."

Fine is suggesting that as researchers we should "work the hyphen" into the research process and into the interpretative process of writing, by remaining a character in the representation.

My attempts at working the hyphen into the research process took on another dimension when I was featured in an article in the local newspaper, where I was "placed" and categorized and so it seemed that I was becoming a part of my research as well (See Appendix F for complete article). The journalist Megan Power wrote after interviewing me:

> "When University of Natal masters student Aline John embarked on a study of Indian identity three years ago, she was accused, by many in her community of perpetuating "Indian-ness". Ironically, in persevering in her research, she has discovered her African-ness ... John, who has a Christian

and Hindu background has grappled with issues of identity for many years." (*Daily News*, 11 August 2002)

The journalist places me as an Indian and subsequently suggests that I have "discovered" my African-ness. This article is indicative of my working the hyphen, becoming involved at a personal level in the research (and being represented in a way in which I ultimately had little control).

4.5   Conclusion

This chapter has dealt in detail with the methodological approach adopted in this dissertation. Following from the "social constructionism" approach adopted in the literature review, methodological implications are explained in this chapter. Social constructionists concede that identity is created and not a fixed or "objective" essence. Rather "objects" or "identities" appear "naturalized" because they are constructed as such. As an approach social constructionism allows us to see the "social constructedness" of ethnic or racial identities. This philosophical approach is contrary to "positivism" or "descritptive social science" where it was agreed that research could produce "accurate" models and/or representations of the world. Rather the "crisis of representation" has allowed the world of the researcher to be exposed for the "fragility" and instability of representation. This chapter goes into detail about the "crisis of representation".

Since the world is "discursively constructed" it becomes important to identify and decode the "constructions" that people engage in creating their social worlds. This study is about the struggles over Indian identity in the public sphere. Since Indian-ness itself constructed we need to expose the discourses that individuals use to create and sustain these re-creations of identity and collectivity.

The primary material was the interviews undertaken with cultural mediators as well as radio talkshows. All of these were transcribed and analysed (See Section 4.4 for details on the fieldwork process). The analysis undertaken was informed

by the Poststructuralist approach. The approach argues that "language" and/or "discourse" are important to identifying the constructions of society. Poststructuralists propose that meaning is produced through language and that these constructions are central to our sense of ourselves (identity), our sense of the world (knowledge) and our place in the world.

Generally it is agreed that language not only expresses the ideas that circulate in any particular context, but also reflects and affects the practices that prevail in culture or any other sphere of activity. "Discourse" then not only refers to patterns of language, or particular kinds and uses of language, but involves also the awareness that language is not independent of the material conditions of society, but is shaped *by* them and implicated *in* them (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This dissertation focuses its analysis on the discourses that emerge from the interview transcripts and other primary material identified. Discourse analysis allows us to see "behind" the language and identify the "discourses" creating meaning around Indian-ness. Some of these discourses are contradictory and antagonistic but they all inform the various subject positions and collective experiences that South African Indians ascribe to or defy.

Chapter Five

In Search of the Authentic Indian: Constructions of "Essentialist" Indian Identity

"If you don't know where you are coming from, how can you know where you are going?" (Hassim Seedat, 2002)

"Maintenance of the Indian languages is important to preserve identity and maintain solidarity, culture and religion in the community. We cannot deny our Indian heritage and the fact that we are Indian." (*The Leader*, 11 August 2003)

"It is sad how the South African Indian communities have lost parts of their culture and customs." (*Post*, 2-5 Dec 1999)

"And the devil is of course within ourselves: the most vociferously anti-Western crusaders I meet are inevitably the ones who are most hybrid. It is these comfortably situated citizens, these Resident Non-Indians, who, beset by a consciousness of their own isolation from "Real India", feel an overpowering nostalgia for an Indian-ness that never was, for a mythical paradisiacal lost garden of cultural and spiritual unity. From their fear of the mongrel nature of their own selves, from their fear of the new Indian tongues spoken by their mongrel children, grows the golem-demon of the All-devouring West, in whose dread shadow a koel becomes a secret signal of betrayal, and the word "dharma" a fatal compromise. To alleviate this loss, to vanquish this terror, they perform a rather complicated ritual war-dance against the West, or against an idea of the West. The central mystical paradox in this ritual is the absolute necessity of Western recognition, or even any foreign recognition, as an imprimatur of quality, and a simultaneous belief in the corrupting power of such recognition" (Vickram Chandra, www.bostonreview.mit.edu, 23 April 2003)

5.1 Introduction

South Africans of Indian origin have been present in South Africa since 1860 and they have been seen over the years as "unassimilable aliens" (Davenport and Saunder, 2000:367) or alternatively as the "Indian problem". To some extent, they still continue to feel (with some justification?) that they are regarded as objects of suspicion in the 'New' South Africa, accused of exploiting Africans and, in the past, of having collaborated with apartheid. In this climate of increased insecurity, some Indians are asserting their links to India and claiming membership of an Indian diasporic community. This involves the (re)assertion of an essentialist Indianness and it is the linguistic and cultural texture of this reassertion in Durban - articulated by various self-appointed cultural "mediators" attempting to create new and essentialist identifications - on which this chapter focuses.

Raman (2003) suggests that this is not the first time that Indian South Africans have looked beyond the borders of the nation state to negotiate a sense of home, place, and belonging. Raman (2003) suggests that Indian South Africans have always had a complex relationship with India, and at certain critical junctures, espoused a diasporic consciousness rather than a purely South African identity. The early apartheid period, when India took such a strong stand against the South African government, was another such moment. At this time Yusuf Dadoo's anti-apartheid activism came to exemplify a transnational sense of Indian South African belonging. At critical moments in history South African Indians have displayed a greater diasporic consciousness than at others. This thesis argues that one such moment is now. Broadly speaking, there is a general crisis of identity amongst South African Indians that is manifesting itself in a greater diasporic consciousness. But what is the nature of the contemporary moment and of the diasporic consciousness to which South African Indians are being invited to embrace? This chapter explores this moment of "crisis" and the essentialist portrayal of Indian identity implicit in this growing diasporic consciousness.

In the words of Vikram Chandra (www.bostonreview.mit.edu, 23 April 2003) people like those described in this chapter are "...beset by a consciousness of their own isolation from 'Real India', people [who] feel an overpowering nostalgia for an Indian-ness." This chapter demonstrates that a cross-section of the South African Indian community clearly displays "nostalgia for an Indian-ness", and is involved in various ways in the search for an "authentic" Indian identity.[52] Chandra cautions that this search for an authentic Indian-ness is really a search for something unreal, a "mythical paradisiacal lost garden," a point made strongly in Chapter Two. This search is actually driven by the fear of the real situation, hybridity, "... fear of the *mongrel nature* of their own selves ..." That one of the motivating factors for their search for Indian-ness is fear, is clearly demonstrated by the primary material presented in this chapter. That is, individuals who seek a "pure/traditional/static" identity are actually deeply hybrid, but do not want to acknowledge this because they fear loss of identity; and this fear is evidenced in their search for authenticity (and their denunciations of "the West").

The chapter, then, tries to describe this contemporary "moment" through an exploration of essentialist discourses of Indian-ness. Interestingly, Indians with affiliations to Hinduism are not the only ethnic/cultural group seeking redefinition in the post-apartheid era. Although Muslim identity is not the focus of this dissertation, as a religious group they are seeking redefinition within the new South Africa - by drawing their roots from the Arabian Peninsula and explicitly rejecting "Indianness". In an interview, Dr Adam Habib stated that:

> "...there are currently Muslim schools being established all over this country and the potential of which we have not imbibed yet ... In ten to fifteen years time we could have people reaching young adulthood who have never interacted with a non-Muslim in their lives and for those people there is no such thing as an Indian identity, in fact for a number of Muslim people they argue that they see themselves as Muslim in fact a lot of them try quite hard and incorrectly most of the time to draw their roots from the Arabian peninsula and not from the Indian subcontinent, so what

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52 Identity is used in the singular form since the constructions of Indian identity discussed in this chapter are essentialised, that is insisting on a singular identity and not a plural one.

is this Indian social identity?..." (Interview with Dr Adam Habib, 9 Nov 2000)

This point was repeated at the Conference on "Indians in the New South Africa", held on 27 April 2001.

The negotiation of identities is a common phenomenon in contemporary globalized and hybrid societies. In Chapter Two, literature was discussed that documents the struggle of other diasporic Indian communities to find their "place" in their host society. For example, Jane Jacobs (1994) cites the struggles of Bengali settlers in London as indicative of the struggles of minority communities in their host environment. Jacobs explores the politics of identity in Spitalfields, which as a place came to signify two different senses of place for two groups of people. Spitalfields for the British suggested old ideas of Britishness in an environment where the old notions of Englishness became popular. This is juxtaposed with Bengalis' idea of Spitalfields as a new home environment typical of "another part of Banglandesh" (Jacobs, 1994:101). This struggle resulted in the emergence of new notions of Englishness and Bengali-ness.

5.2   Crisis of Identity? Freeze, flee ... or fight

As a point of departure for the following discussion on the general crisis of South African Indians in South Africa I draw on an article by Dr Ashwin Desai, which was written on the eve of the 1998 General Elections. The article is reproduced in full in Box 4.

Box 4: **"Freeze, flee ... or fight" by Dr Aswin Desai** ***Sunday Tribune*, 16 August 1998.**	
Guest writer and sociologist Dr Ashwin Desai author of 'Arise Ye Coolies', who wrote his doctorate on ethnic mobilization, says the Indian community here must prepare itself for a struggle in the emerging democracy, and entrench its place in the "rainbow nation" without fear. There are three physiological responses which every	Unfortunately this was not to be. Indians are a classic "minority" group. Caught between rampant black elite who think that because they have "arrived" in the political sphere, they can push everyone around and unreconstructed white racists who still hold sway in the business world, the ordinary Indian man and

animal displays when it is in a state of fear: it freezes, flees or turns to fight. *Now, if there is one characteristic that defines the Indian community in South Africa at this time it is fear* and, as expected, it responds the way nature decrees. The Indian community simply won't survive unless it discards freezing up and fleeing as strategies to cope with its situation. The time is fast approaching when Indians must prepare themselves again to fight. This fight is not against other racial groups or communities, nor is it a fight to protect, as certain race baiters are sure to respond, the "privileges" Indians have secured over the years. It is simply a fight for their place in this society, free of fear and free of apology.

Many people outside the community will struggle to understand how Indians are still made to feel they do not belong. Sometimes it is just a look, a sneer or a whispered "amakula". Many other times it is pretty damn explicit, like affirmative action policies where only pigment counts.

Throughout South African history, the Indian has always been the scapegoat, the perpetual stranger. During indenture, Indians were super-exploited and brutalized by the English sugar barons and, when they had done with the Indians, the authorities tried to repatriate us. During apartheid Indians were denoted in the history books as the "Indian problem" and herded into "coolie locations." And in times of economic downturn, like 1949 and 1985, Indians became victims of African anger. Indeed Indians' entire history, with the odd protest here and there, is a chronology of victimization.

During the heady days of resistance it was expected that this would change once apartheid was defeated. Then Indians would finally be full and equal citizens of this beautiful land.

woman live a very uncertain existence. The responses from the leaders of the community have taken two tracks. Most of the politicos have tried to ingratiate themselves with the ruling party, the ruling culture and the ruling race. Trying so hard to be raceless they have hidden behind their struggle CVs and party connections. Nevertheless they have suffered: Govin Reddy being the most obvious example. The super-rich business class has also found a temporary reprieve using its wealth to, literally, buy seats at Mandela's table and thereby create some space for themselves. For ordinary people, the response has been to become more insular; erecting high walls and neighbourhood watches or taking plane tickets to Australia. Others still have adopted a chilling and unacceptable racism, picking fights with Africans who wander into their street as a way of asserting themselves.

This is not the way. Indians must reach back into a proud history of struggle and mobilize for their place in the sun.

Indians must attack the "common sense" calculations that everyone makes every day on the basis of race; there are too many Indian judges now, or a rich African still gets the job above a working class Indian ... Indians must strengthen community organizations that challenge the authorities ... The time has come for Indians to stop being victims and to become makers of their own destiny ... Not since Gandhi have Indians had ideals that could unite us. It is not a time to flee or freeze, but to fight. To fight for a South African future.

Ashwin Desai takes it as axiomatic that South African Indians in the post-apartheid period are experiencing a situation of structural insecurity and fear. He is of course arguing for a political and social reaction quite different to the "reassertion" of an essential Indianness or a diasporic identity which is the subject of this chapter. But his analysis does highlight a context which is perhaps providing fertile ground for those advancing the need for defensive identity-building strategies. This was confirmed by many of the other interviews conducted for this thesis.

There clearly has been a general crisis of identity amongst South African Indians that has manifested itself in identifiable ways. First, the ethnic signifier Indian is widely clung to despite its association with apartheid. Apartheid ineluctably racialised individuals and therefore race and/or ethnicity were defining factors of

society: This research shows that in post-apartheid South Africa, racial thinking and identification is still prevalent. Radio Lotus Talkshow host, Devi Sankaree Govender, explained it in the following way:

> **Aline**: "How do you think that many other Indians feel, from the calls (Radio Lotus talkshow) that you receive, do you think that many of them see themselves as South African Indian or Indian South African?"

> **Ms Devi Sankaree Govender**: "There are a few people and I hate putting rough percentages on things that I am not too sure about but nonetheless but I would say that 40 per cent of South Africans of Indian descent see themselves as South African first ... *it is the other worrying 60 per cent who see themselves as Indian first.* There are lots of reasons for that.

> The major reason is that people in the face of adversity especially minorities, the world over the first thing that they do is to attach their cultural tag first so that they can feel some kind of safety, 'I belong to something'. *Indians can't see themselves as being part of the bigger South African community, they know they are a minority, they know they didn't vote right.* Although the percentage turn out for the tricameral elections in 1984 was quite low, the fact is that they did turn out. They know that they did not vote correctly for the 1994 elections, the majority of them voted for what we would term an apartheid political party, so as a result you get a group of people here now who think, *'oh my God we are not really South Africans, we are Indians, we are a minority so let's cling to what we have' and the only thing that they have is the name called Indian, that's all there is.*

> They don't have any shared identities with any other groups, yet you would think that because Indians and Africans and Coloureds come from a disadvantaged community they would share some kind of link. The majority of Indians don't see that link. They see themselves as being the wronged parties, they see themselves as apartheid worked against because all they will remember is the fact they moved to Cato Manor ..."
> (Interview with Ms Devi-Sankaree Govender, 7 September 2000).

Ms Govender suggests that South African Indians are holding onto the racial/ethnic signifier since they feel under threat, 'we are a minority so let's cling to what we have' and the only thing that they have is the name called Indian and marginalised Indians can't see themselves as being part of the bigger South African community, they know they are a minority in South African society". Her reference to voting patterns is interesting, and this is considered further in the next

chapter which explores the ways Indianness is being "invented" in contemporary South Africa. In Chapter Six, too, discourses of marginalisation are identified and explored in more detail.

Mr Bramdaw ascribes the sense of isolation that South African Indians feel, to what he refers to as the "fear factor",

> **Mr Bramdaw**: "Well I have looked at that very closely and I think that part of it was the fear factor. And I describe it as a fear factor because largely I think in those concerns put fear into people's lives in what the future was going to hold. And see, while the apartheid regime was the known devil there was the uncertainty of what was going to happen or is happening through social destruction within society so that ... you know there are valid reasons for their concerns ..." (Interview with Mr Bramdaw, 18 May 2001).

Mr Bramdaw argues that South African Indians feel isolated since they are "fearful" of the future. His description of their fear is littered with metaphorical and emotive language where he describes apartheid as the devil, but since it was a devil that was known to South African Indians, it was feared less than an uncertain future. Apartheid is described as evil, but it is the unknown that Mr. Bramdaw feels is leading to South African Indians feeling threatened. This threatened feeling also led to South African Indians stocking up on canned food before the elections, which was a phenomenon not limited to South African Indians, but included whites as well (Ballard, 2002). Devi Sankaree Govender notes this too: "you know just like how it was before the 1994 elections everybody was buying tins of sardines ...' (Interview with Ms Devi-Sankaree Govender, 7 September 2000).

Another identifiable theme is the frequency with which greater diasporic identification with India among Indian South Africans is linked to the current "identity crisis". There was a lot of talk about "identity crisis" in the interviews with cultural mediators, as in the press. Ashwin Desai in his capacity as a Radio Talkshow Host for Radio Lotus, comments on this link and argues that identifying further with India rather than South Africa, is the wrong way to go –

in his view, this is a "cocoon mentality" that will make matters worse. The following extract is from a show he hosted that asked a key question, "What is Indian?"

> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "…we find ourselves in a very serious identity crisis because from my interactions with people *they like to see themselves as Indian* and of course people from Europe you call them Europeans, people from Italy you call them Italians, people from India you call them Indians born from there, and we were not born from India, we were born in South Africa so we are very much South Africans. I would like to believe that the only relationship that Indians, that we have with India is the fact that our forefathers were born there. Our motherland is not India, it is South Africa. It is important that while we pride ourselves in our rich cultural, religious and linguistic heritage, we remain South African.
>
> *We see ourselves as Indians and by seeing ourselves as Indians and not South Africans first, it will serve to further alienate and marginalise us as a community. The cocoon mentality still exists* and we would have survived that mentality maybe 10 years ago, we cannot survive that mentality today. We need to be part of the majority of this country today, we have to be part of the masses, and we need to identify ourselves as South Africans. That is important and within the context we then display our cultural - you know - religious and linguistic attributes. I think that is what makes an excellent healthy democracy where each group within the democracy can display their own unique cultures and so on so long as in the end they see themselves as a whole." (Radio Lotus Talkshow with Dr Ashwin Desai and Guest Speaker Professor Thomas Hanson, 24 June 1999).

Dr Ashwin Desai raises a logical argument: why should South African Indians, who were not born in India, claim an Indian national identity? But then this begs the question, is it a national identity that they are claiming? Most South African Indians do not display a strong conviction to return to India. Rather this identification – what Featherstone (1997: 47) calls "the desire to return home" – "becomes an important theme – regardless of whether home is real or imaginary, temporary, syncretized, or simulated, or whether it is manifest in a fascination with the sense of belonging, affiliation, and community attributed to the home of others". This is a powerful identification, and it is only in Featherstone's sense that this sense of belonging is "imaginary".

National identification is one of the pillars of the identity constructions of South African Indians. However the claim to India may not be national after all, but is perhaps best seen as "diasporic". The next section will deal with questions around the apparent resurgence of Indianness in post-apartheid South Africa.

5.3 Resurgence of an Indian-ness?

Stuart Hall suggests there are three possible consequences of globalisation for cultural identities: erosion, strengthening, or the emergence of new identities or 'new ethnicities'. Diasporic literature suggests that diasporic communities wax and wane in their assertion of their "original" identity during different historical moments, displaying a greater diasporic consciousness at particular times. In contemporary South Africa as many communities struggle with their identity, South African Indians are asserting particular identities and thus forming different *imagined communities*. In particular as a community, they are expressing a greater diasporic consciousness than ever before.

Stuart Hall (1997: 177) speaks about "defensive exclusivism" or an "embattled defensiveness of [a] narrow, national definition ... of cultural identity" as the response of the dominant culture to post-colonial immigration to the UK. The same could be said for South African Indians. At this contemporary moment, the latter are displaying "defensive exclusivism" in response to the changes in the South African socio-political environment and many of the linkages and new identifications with India that are being developed, can also be seen in this light.

In the public sphere during the period under review, numerous events occurred that suggested the development of a greater "diasporic consciousness" among South African Indians and thus a resurgence of Indian-ness. Take for example *Post*, a newspaper that appeal to a largely Indian readership in Durban. *Post* initiated certain changes to its newspaper that highlight this resurgence in Indian-ness. Many commentators point to this resurgence – yet others dispute its existence, or feel that it its complexity needs to be better understood.

5.3.1 New-Look *Post* and Other Stories

As a prominent public platform for debate, various reactions were provoked when the local "Indian" KwaZulu-Natal *Post* changed its front page layout as well as including new features. A new design on its masthead pictures the Taj Mahal gives greetings in the vernacular and introduces a picture feature highlighting what Indians around the globe are up to. Most of the readers of *Post* indicated enthusiasm for the new look:

> "... The Taj Mahal symbolizes all things that are Indian and I think that it was a brilliant idea to include it as part of the logo. The greetings in the respective vernacular languages are also an exciting feature of *Post*."
> (Miss Medisha Deenanath, *Post*, 7 April 1999)

> "*Post* has always been closely connected to the Indian community and the greetings not only entrench this relationship but also serve as a reminder of our cultural roots." (Mr Ganas Marimuthu, *Post*, 7 April 1999)

However some readers felt that the new-look *Post* was not South African, since it displayed cultural icons from India. Mr. Thanal Rama, in a letter to the Editor (*Post*, 14 April 1999) commented:

> "My only criticism of the new Post logo is that it's un-South African. Why use a logo of a monument (Taj Mahal) which is in India? Could we not find a South African logo which is Indian, such as a 'cane-cutter'? We should be proud of our roots in SA. We came as 'cane-cutters' or 'coolies' and have shown considerable progress since 1860."

It could be pointed out to Mr. Rama that even a cane-cutter is a wider symbol than a South African one: a large proportion of Indians from India served as indentured labourers in various parts of the world, working either as "cane-cutters" or "coolies" and therefore this was not a uniquely South African but rather a diasporic experience. Still, his point is clear.

Another indication of the resurgence of Indian-ness, revealed by heightened religious practices, is the establishment of the Surat Hindoo Primary School in Westville, Durban. The school provides language lessons from three to five pm every day, with teachers who work on a voluntary basis. It is the only established

school in Durban in which vernacular languages are taught. The school concentrates its efforts on children at a young age. Brian Moorvan, headmaster of the Surat Hindoo Primary School, feels that "... at least there is grounding and it will be easier to perfect it at a later time." (*Indigo*, May 1999).

Interviews with social commentators suggested that feelings of isolation and marginalisation are leading to a resurgence of Indian-ness, but most were careful to stress the complexity if the phenomenon:

> **Aline**: "Do you think that Indians are beginning to identify more with their culture and cultural organizations? There's been a lot in the press about that ..."

> **Devi Sankaree Govender**: "Ya ... yes and no. Yes, because they need something to hang onto. Their children are going to school now and in Grade 1 they are picking up Zulu so there's this almost desperate need to go for sathsung and when the temple has a big prayer they must go for that and teach their children some Hindi. There's the whole minority psychology of 'Let's hang on', and yet you get the same people who complain of being a minority and yet they don't do anything to uplift their own culture."

> **Aline**: "Do you really think that they are taking part more in their culture?"

> **Devi Sankaree Govender**: 'Again yes and no. But let's face it, young people have moved away from the so-called Eastern tradition of culture, that's the reality. There is a group of them who are feeling extremely insecure about who they are and they are hanging onto that but there are also the other group who love the Western world, that can eat in Wimpy, that they can go to nightclubs, that they can drink and smoke ... there are good bits and bad bits but they are selective about what they choose to complain about.' (Interview with Devi Sankaree-Govender, 7 September 2000)

This resurgence is a complicated phenomenon in the Indian community. Ms Govender suggests that this crisis of identity is due to both local and global forces. The political and economic changes that have occurred in South Africa have meant that South African Indians are feeling increasingly marginalised. In addition there are globalising forces, which those fighting to win new essentialist identifications, lump together under the term "westernisation". Govender

pinpoints the bogey or "golem-demon" of westernization as something that many of those attempting to shape an "authentic" Indian consciousness fasten onto "… there are also the other group who love the Western world, that can eat in Wimpy, that they can go to nightclubs, that they can drink and smoke …"

Yogin Devan, a newspaper columnist for the *Sunday Times*, poses an interesting question that further problematises the notion of resurgence in Indian-ness in the community: "Is it really resurgence if only 30 girls are dancing Indian classical dance, and these are only rich girls?" (Interview with Yogin Devan, 1 June 2000). Perhaps the "resurgence" in Indian-ness in the South African community is occurring only amongst the higher socio-economic classes. This would make the phenomenon more an indulgence of the rich, of relatively small importance to most South African Indians.

However, in the interviews a number of commentators argued for a broader resurgence of Indianness. There is a distinct sense that there is resurgence in Indian-ness that is perhaps not just limited to the higher economic class. This may manifest itself in dress, food or religious association. A cultural leader and academic, Professor Brij Maharaj, said:

> "I think that *broadly there is a heightened sense of being Indian* and that is being expressed in different ways in terms of language, religion and culture in its broadly inclusive … I always say dressing, I don't think that in the past 20 years [students would be] going out in what we call punjabis but in India we call Salma Kameez. If you look at campus, if you look at Natal University over the past seven years you will see more and more students will wear an Indian dress or wear a cultural dot - almost a celebration of identity - which you didn't have before, and I think that's one of the symbolism of that heightened awareness …
>
> I think that broadly you have globalisation but it is also about a cultural hegemony which is coming from the US so you know we all dress in a certain way we drink coco-cola and we wear takkies, you know certain takkies and we are watching the same American Movies on television, on CNN we see Larry King. I think that is another global factor that must be considered and then people start asking and I think that the majority of the youth follow that culture. And I think every now and then you have got

second and third generation parents who are worried about their culture and religion.

I think that when you look at conversion (I should have mentioned that earlier) you have got the joint family system. You had the grandparents who normally transmitted the religious values and it was the oral tradition. Now when you think of the Ramayan and the Gita - although recently the versions of the Ramayan and the Gita are available in English in South Africa ... But the value system was transmitted orally, so in a move towards the nuclear family etc you find that dissemination is reduced and also the present generation of grandparents themselves know very little ... and I think the way in which prayers and all that is done is mechanical so you do it without understanding. You are aware of the different celebrations but with little understanding, I think that is the problem. One must understand why we pray for the sun because the sun god is important, when you look at African culture the notion of the sun is important.

... So to come back to the point about our youth, I think that our youth are also asking these questions. I think they don't understand some of these rituals. In a sense I think that the point that Ashwin [Desai] made about the notion of Hinduism having to re-invent itself, you know we have got to look at that. That those practices etc, religion is dynamic, it's not static and I think that we need to say what is relevant for South Africa ..."
(Interview with Professor Brij Maharaj, 15 November 2000)

Professor Brij Maharaj suggested at least two explanations for what he views as the current resurgence of interest in "Indian-ness" in various forms. First, he argues, South African Indians who during apartheid were assigned the identity of a broad homogenous grouping, irrespective of religious or linguistic affiliation, are now celebrating their *specific* identities - their uniqueness. Secondly, globalization and its accompanying forces have meant that communities have felt their identities under threat and therefore they need to protect it. The incorporation of South Africa into the global world and the breakdown of racial grouping have placed young people in a very different environment to that experienced by the older generation and those of middle age. Coupled with this has been the breakdown of the extended family that passed on the oral traditions of culture, "...You had the grandparents who normally transmitted the religious values and it was the oral tradition. Now when you think of the Ramayan and the

Gita - although recently the versions of the Ramayan and the Gita are available in English in South Africa ... But the value system was transmitted orally, so in a move towards the nuclear family...you find that dissemination is reduced and also the present generation of grandparents themselves know very little". Dr. Naresh Veeran, who was Radio Lotus Station Manager at the time this research was conducted, captures this well:

> And the other environmental change that I felt was that, well I grew up in a school where the entire group in the class was all Indian, and I don't know what its like to study with [others]. It's only at university level, that the groups were mixed. But I mean now its different, kids in school they all talk with similar accents, I mean that is what is different. We grew up in an area where we speak differently, we acted differently, we talked differently, we ate differently, and we dressed differently, so that is what happened. So now I just think that the environment is such that so many things have changed and people, newspapers like the *Post*, the *Sunday Times Extra*, the *Tribune Herald*, has suddenly just remained these icons that just went along, that didn't respond to these changes." (Interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, 3 November 2000).

While Professor Brij Maharaj states that South African Indians are more inclined to wear Indian dress than before, Dr Naresh Veeran disagrees. In the following extract, Dr Veeran explains his dilemma in attempting to cater for a diverse group of people at the radio station. He makes it clear that he does not want Radio Lotus to "just remain [an] icon ... that didn't respond to the changes". (It should be noted that Dr Veeran's comments on air were causing considerable controversy at the time):

> **Dr Naresh Veeran**: "... I said, listen Indian people don't walk around in saris anymore, they dress in western dress, go to western institutions. Even the whole segregation idea of schools and all of those things have now dissolved so much so that *you have a generation of people growing up, who may not necessarily want to be Indian, who may be Indian by virtue of the colour of their skin but little about them is suddenly Indian*, especially young kids you know, people under the age of 25 say, who have this thing about not being Indian, and there are people who deliberately don't want to be Indian, there's a group who just don't want to, who try and keep away from everything that is Indian because for whatever reason, maybe historical reasons or whatever the reasons are.

So you have got that group. Then you have got a group of people who are very very traditional, want to hold on, want to hang onto everything, hang onto their religious beliefs … But many of those are very hypocritical as well, you know, you will find that they choose to be Indian at certain times and they choose not to be at a certain times.

So within the context of having these different sort of groups in the community, there's one station trying to address all of them at the same time, its very difficult, so what we need to do is focus on a certain group, with a certain kind of idea, with a certain kind of outlook on life and say, Listen I am Indian in a sense of that my traditions and my roots are there, but I am also South African first as well. That's what I am, South African, and what I am trying to do is to try and create a station that says that as well. I am South African, this is a South African radio station but our roots are Indian and we recognise that, we are going to show it, and that is what the plan is for next year, to launch a station like that.
(Interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, 3 November 2000).

Both Maharaj and Veeran appear to agree that although South African Indians do not wear Indian dress regularly, they are however more inclined to wear Indian dress on certain occasions. This is a general phenomenon occurring amongst the South African Indian population, especially since it has become "trendy" to be Indian (see Chapter Seven). Dr Veeran is suggesting that there are sub-categories of South African Indians who are located on a continuum of wanting to assert a fundamentalist Indian identity, through to a total dissociation from anything Indian and perhaps identification with being African. This continuum that this dissertation is suggesting is explained in the following schematic representation, and the idea of the continuum will be expanded upon further in the next chapter.

Essentialist	South African	Counter-Essentialist
(Indian)		

Does the resurgence of Indian-ness, especially in its more fundamentalist forms, mean that more South African Indians are becoming Hindus, or rather that they are becoming more public in their religious practices? After all, in the New South Africa communities are encouraged to show their differences. Dr Anand Singh was asked whether or not he could identify a revival of religious identity in the

"new" South Africa. His reply focuses on global linkages, which have allowed new identifications with India:

> **Dr Anand Singh**: "I don't believe that there's been a strengthening of religious identity but what I do think has happened is that, with the increasing of the types of contacts that can occur internationally, it has given the Indian population the space to entrench their links with other forms of political and religious groupings outside of South Africa, more particularly India. We have had for instance a rise of solidarity amongst the Tamil speaking community in South Africa, with the Tamil Eelam Movement in Sri Lanka. We have seen recently the formation of a RSS group which is linked with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or the VHP in India. So Tamil solidarity reflecting South Indian identity, VHP in many ways reflecting North Indian identity ... that has helped to infiltrate but it's not as extensive as the press often makes it out to be. I don't think that they will become major forces in the Indian community because by and large religious worship and identity and solidarity have taken very different forms in South Africa which are very unique to this country." (Interview with Dr Anand Singh, 17 November 2000)

While Professor Brij Maharaj states that there has been a heightened sense of Indian-ness demonstrated through dress, Dr Anand Singh agrees but adds that this heightened sense of Indian-ness can be ascribed to the creation of links with the global groupings. He emphasizes that a new assertion of Indian-ness may not necessarily translate itself into a heightened sense of religious identification:

> **Dr Anand Singh**: "For instance while on the one hand we have had temples in South Africa which cater mainly for the linguistic groups, and to that extent you would have for instance the Umgeni Road Temple which has mainly South Indian following, then you have the Somtseu Road Temple, which has mainly a North Indian following. But then all of these have a religious cum linguistic identities merging into the more major movements, such as the Hare Krishna Movements where the linguistic and regional identities do not count. The Divine Life Society, the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, these organisations pay attention to linguistic and regional differences but they are not the core activities of these centres and they certainly command the major followings of those Indians who would consider themselves to be Hindus. But also ... a sizeable segment of the Indian population has converted to Christianity and to that extent ... those who have converted to Christianity are not going to show much identity and solidarity with Hindu movements and that's why I say it takes a very particular South African form than any other." (Interview with Dr Anand Singh, 17/11/2000)

But Mr Bramdaw feels that a heightened sense of religious identification is also evident amongst the youth. In making this point, Mr. Bramdaw raises the subject of the names young people choose for their children. The celebration of Indian-ness, he argues, is also evident in the choosing of traditional Indian names for children, as opposed to a time when English names were chosen instead. Interestingly, he makes an explicit comparison with new African identifications (but does not go so far as to suggest that Indian people adopt African names):

Mr Bramdaw: "… There may be to an extent deal of interest in religion. I think that the younger people have suddenly found or rediscovered the value of their religion and …"

Aline: "In what way do you feel that?"

Mr Bramdaw: "Because of their participation in religious organisations, their response to religious influences, their interest in reading deeper into religious literature at this particular point in time rather than some years ago when they were discarding those sort of religious influences, playing it down and aping the West and [not?] wanting to be seen as different. We see it in the change of names of individuals, particularly with the Tamil community where I think that the influence is very very strong and it may also be due to the influence of Christianity so that they tend to take on Western names, like Deon and Shaun and Cheryl and whatever the name may be, however that is beginning to change. It's more prevalent with the Indian community or the Tamil community first of all and I see that developing amongst the Hindi-speaking people as well. Also Africans who used to have English name when they were registered. In addition to a traditional name and a surname they have now discarded the English version and they are sticking to their traditional names and some of them are quite tongue-twisting but they have gone back and they are taking pride in their civilisation and their tradition.' (Interview with Mr Bramdaw, 18 May 2001)

Finally, in thinking about a resurgence of identification with Indianness if not India itself, the phenomenon of the Bollywood movie is interesting to consider. Media reports indicate that in the last few years, Bollywood movies have taken South Africa by storm, generating millions of rands for the industry. Ster Kinekor, the country's leading cinema group, which is currently releasing twenty-four Indian film titles a year locally, said Bollywood had become a multi-million rand business (*Business Times*, 26 October 2003). Ster Kinekor, which launched

the Bollywood brand in 1998, says the circuit attracts more than 1.1 million patrons annually:

> "...the Bollywood movie wave is taking Durban by storm with blockbusters such as Kuch Kuch Hota Hai and Prem Agan packing in audiences at upmarket theatres, such as Musgrave Centre ..." (*Sunday Tribune*, 15 November 1998, See Appendix F for full article).

Fiaz Mohamed, chief operations officer for Ster Kinekor said:

> "The Bollywood circuit is less profitable than the commercial circuit because the cost of acquiring exhibition rights to show the movies is high. However we regard the Bollywood circuit as a viable niche market, which we are committed to developing and growing rather than just dabbling in it." (*Business Times*, 26 October 2003)

Recently there has been a proliferation of Indian movies showing on the movie circuit. The major box office hits during the period under review were *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, Kutch Kutch Hota Hai, Chalte Chalte* and *Dil Ka Rishta*. Mr AB Moosa, MD of Avalon Cinecentre Management said,

> "There has been a major revival in the Bollywood industry in the last 5 to 10 years. People are going back to watch Indian movies, especially with the kids." (*Business Times*, 26 October 2003)

It can be concluded then, that there is a revitalized interest in watching Indian movies, perhaps because Indian movies are more accessible than in the past. It should be noted; however, that although it does in some cases appear indicative of a resurgence of Indian-ness, watching of Indian movies is not limited to Indians only. These movies are also watched by other racial groups, although in negligible numbers. Bollywood is "trendy" or "cool" (see Chapter Seven).

5.4   Claiming "Authentic" Indian-ness

Despite the complexity revealed in the above discussion, at one level it is possible to clearly identify the strong articulation of an inward-looking and exclusivist discourse of "Indian" identity in the contemporary period. This section attempts to disaggregate the key components of this discourse of fundamentalist or

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essentialist "Indianness" currently being articulated in the public sphere in Durban.

5.4.1 Understandings of Indian-ness

The research suggests that identifications with Indian-ness are constructed in at least two main ways, that is:

- Indian-ness as a geographical identification;
- Indian-ness as a state of being; and

Indian-ness as a geographical identity

It is noteworthy that Indians in South Africa identify themselves as *Indian*, although their ancestors migrated from India years before the establishment of the Indian nation-state in 1947. Indian identity is often assumed to be a homogenous identity, derivative of India with its histories and traditions. This so-called received wisdom about India is itself contentious, veering between two extremes. One is the "essentialist" view of India that is based on the idea of a homogenous nation state. In another view, India is a modern secular state made up of many different religions and linguistic groups, grappling with religious tension. India as a nation-state is deeply divided, although this division is ignored in the identifications of Indians with "India", particularly diasporic Indians. India is seen as a mythical and paradisiacal place that is not beset with religious violence. However, India itself has undergone numerous political and economic changes and what being Indian means has changed during different historical periods. Indian-ness has been a continual struggle along multiple historical and social nodes through negotiation and contestation. The negotiation and search for Indian-ness by many South African Indians does not take cognizance of these changes: India in their minds has remained a static representation.

Within a broad identification with India, sub-identifications with particular groups or parts of India are increasingly common. Individuals who are from the subcontinent may alternately refer to the highly stratified distinctions of language

group, religious affiliation, caste or religion as their primary ethnic identity. That is, Indians from India may alternatively identify themselves as Tamil-speaking or Hindi-speaking or perhaps through a caste affiliation. Increasingly, this process is also occurring amongst South African Indians identifying with India (or a part of it) through a linguistic or religious affiliation. This phenomenon is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

In another excerpt from Radio Lotus, Dr Ashwin Desai in dialogue with Professor Thomas Hanson debates what it means to identify with India in the new South Africa. He argues that it is not easy to be the Indian "stripe" in the new rainbow nation; that "gelling" as an Indian community, as was done in the past, is a very different thing to "gelling" as the Indian contribution to a new, rainbow, South African identity:

> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "... this is the intriguing point Thomas ... we stay in a cocoon, we gel our culture, we put up a barrier, we survive, and we are survivors. Apartheid put us in a thing, we pulled up bootstraps, we had grantee schools, we educated ourselves, and we overcame adversity. We couldn't get money from banks, we shared money, the extended family made us survive, we put people in medical schools, we built our community, we had a sense of homogeneity, and it worked. Now we are saying that the cocoon won't work. But the opening up isn't it also fraught with problems? Isn't it at a time when society's still (through a rainbow nation) still gelling things together about their ethnic identity ... One is sitting in this community and starting to say where should we go from here in a semblance of a voice, what should that voice be saying? ... There is an attraction to go back ..."

> **Professor Thomas Hanson**: 'Yes ... I think I don't see any harm in people trying to revive, I would say even reinvent, their linguistic identity ... I see nothing wrong with that, you know I think ethnicity has been given a bad name in this country because of its specific political uses for a century as such. I think that is one response... which would be one way of dealing with a cocoon and say look we are people who have a ... specific linguistic identity and also certain religious denominations, we eat certain food. Nothing wrong with that you know. Like we see in the US where we see people live with dual identity. They can be sentimentally Greek, Italian, whatever, at the same time they would be fiercely patriotic about being American. It's something maybe worth thinking about, this sort of certain kind of double identity you know where you don't see any contradiction about these kind of things.

The other way - the other way around is say let's forget about ethnicity as a whole focus and focus on what our socio-economic interests are, and that is something, a line that the ANC has been taking broadly. That you find that movement, I see why that move is there, and why it is persuasive in some ways you know. If SA is going to deal in a new way it has to develop a sense of itself as a composite ... Unity in Diversity as they say in India, where they have emphasised diversity a lot but also in a way retained unity ... I think I can understand the reasons for why there's so much about the majority, about unity, but it has to be probably broken up and I am sure over time that democracy over time will do that. Nothing wrong with that, I don't see anything sinister with ethnicity as such. If it is put to use in the way it was put in the previous dispensation, absolutely - there will be big problems. But as such I see nothing wrong with that. But the problems with maybe the overall Indian identity, it's fraught contradictions and cannot probably be - basically it's a racial identity. It is not a cultural identity it's a racial identity.' (Radio Lotus Talkshow with Dr Ashwin Desai and Guest Speaker Professor Thomas Hanson, 24 June 1999)

Indian-ness as a state of being

For Mr Satish Jaggernath, Indian-ness as a state of being is distinctly different from the life and consciousness of the Western world (Interview with Mr Satish Jaggernath, 18 November 2000). Here Indian-ness is juxtaposed to the Western world and all that it offers. Indian-ness is portrayed as being superior to the Western world. It is seen as a "philosophical outlook on life" that is also "distinct and unique in certain respects", that is "an instinct of being".

Aline: 'How would you define Indian-ness?'

Mr Satish Jaggernath: "Indian-ness is a state of being attuned to certain philosophical beliefs and values that are distinctly unique from what the Western world has dictated. In terms of how you perceive your place in the universe, your philosophical outlook on life, the tastes that you have, the things that you reject, many of them are common to other human beings. They are also distinct and unique in certain respects for example, if you say music, music is common yes it's a universal thing, but there are different nuances of music, somehow that evoke in you a certain type of feeling that comes from being Indian, you know. It also is a question of your religious disposition, you don't necessarily have to be a believer in God, in being an Indian, you could be an atheist, and you will still be an Indian because the type of philosophical options that have been presented from [the] Indian South Africa ethos gives you that choice. At the end of

> the day, I don't need anything ... it's a basic sort of instinct of being different from what the Western world has offered." (Interview with Mr Satish Jaggernath, 18 November 2000)

Indian-ness is thus seen as intrinsic to one's sense of being. Mr Jaggernath understands Indian consciousness as something almost "natural" to being an Indian. Similar thoughts were articulated in numerous radio phone-in programmes, for example the following:

> **Sudesh**: "... We are Indians by virtue of our birthright, by the creation. We believe Lord Shiva created us, Lord Rama. We are Indians by our daily beliefs, our customs, our religion, our culture." (Radio Lotus Talkshow with Dr Ashwin Desai and Mr Kumar as the Guest Speaker, 03 July 1999)

The social constructionist approach, of course, suggests that these categories of race and nation have been naturalised, taken for granted and generalized, and that such assumptions require further unpacking.

In an interview with Dr Veena Lutchman she elaborated on her understanding of Indian-ness and again the Indian "state of being" or "state of mind" was mentioned. In this case, however, I was subtly excluded from this "natural" Indian identity because of not being Hindu:

> **Dr Veena Lutchman**: "... I am not saying that we are only Indian but obviously South African first and foremost. But we can never remove that Indian-ness from us, I mean, I don't know about you, the problem is we are from a different background. But Indian philosophy, Indian thought and anything that goes with Indians is very dear to me, the language, the music, the culture. It has something very special and significant in it." (Interview with Dr Veena Lutchman, 3 November 2000)

Dr Lutchman displays her awareness that I am Indian, but "we are from a different background", proposing that perhaps we might have a different conception of Indian-ness due to our religious differences. In general, though, being Indian is seen to create a certain subjectivity that is distinctive and goes beyond regional affiliation or even religion.

In the Radio Talkshow, "Viewpoint" Dr Ashwin Desai asked what it means to be Indian. The following is an interesting dialogue that ensued with a caller:

Dr Ashwin Desai: "What does that mean? How do you know that you are an Indian?'

Pranesh Singh: 'I live according to my culture."

The above statements become the defining statements that guide the rest of the conversation. Pranesh says that the marker "Indian" defines him because he abides by his culture.

Dr Ashwin Desai: "What is your culture? What is your culture? What do you do to be an Indian today? What did you do today?"

Pranesh Singh: "When I get up in the morning I go and do my prayers ..."

Dr Ashwin Desai: "Other people do that, Jewish people do that."

Pranesh Singh: "I bring up my family according to the culture."

Dr Ashwin Desai: "But Jewish people pray ..."

Pranesh Singh: "Yes."

Dr Ashwin Desai: "And African people pray. What religion are you?"

Pranesh Singh: "I am a Hindu."

Dr Ashwin Desai attempts to deconstruct this by asking what Pranesh Singh feels is unique about him being *Indian* and how he relates this to being Hindu:

Dr Ashwin Desai: "But African people are Hindus and they pray too."

Pranesh Singh: "Yes."

Dr Ashwin Desai: "So what did you do today that made you an Indian?"

Pranesh Singh: "I prayed to my God and I lived according to the dictates of my religion that is what makes me an Indian."

Dr Ashwin Desai: "If an African does that ..."

Pranesh Singh: "You know what's the problem ... hello?"

Dr Ashwin Desai: "If an African does that?"

Pranesh Singh: "Then he is living according ... living according to an African culture ... nothing wrong with that."

> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "But if he prays to an Indian God and lives according to Hindu then what does that make him?"
>
> **Pranesh Singh**: "That makes him a Hindu."
>
> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "…then that makes him an Indian?"
>
> **Pranesh Singh**: "Yes…" (Radio Lotus Talkshow, "What does it mean to be Indian?", 20 July 1999)

Here Desai tries to peel back for Pranesh Singh the layers of what it means to be Indian. The respondent bases his Indian-ness on being Hindu. Thus surely an African Hindu would be considered Indian - the point with which Ashwin finally ends the conversation. Whether or not the respondent is convinced is debateable. However the dialogue certainly exposes 'Indian-ness' as an imaginary construct: whether it is constructed geographically, in terms of religious sensibility or simply "Indian consciousness", Indian-ness is constructed rather than given.

5.4.2 Themes of Essentialist Indian Identity

Recreations of Indian-ness can be seen in the following themes identifiable within the discourse of essentialist Indian-ness in Durban. Identifications are being made (or at least called for) in terms of these themes. Through these identifications Indian-ness is constructed as diametrically opposite to the identity of the "other" – that is, other racial groups:

- A Romanticised Past
- Eternal/Timeless Essence
- Charitable Nature
- Mahatma Gandhi Influence and Resistance
- Morality
- Industrious/Hard Working

Each of these is explored briefly below.

A Romanticised Past

Mr Rajbansi, the Minority Front leader claims that during apartheid Indians were a much more cohesive group,

> "You know our forefathers lived in tremendous measure of friendship with each other. If there was a Muslim festival, they participated, if there was a Hindu festival, the Muslim came and helped. Each caste, right … it was not the extent where you get marriage across language line, across religious line but [now] there are religious organisations that have closed shop. You see they don't invite people outside the group in spite of the fact that they are maybe Hindus, you know, like the Muslim community is divided between Thakees and Sunis etc."(Amichand Rajbansi, Minority Front Political Rally, 15 November 2000)

In the apartheid era, Rajbansi suggests that South African Indians were a far more integrated group, where religious groups within the Indian community supported each other. Currently Indians are fragmenting along linguistic and religious lines. Rajbansi paints a picture of a former cohesive community in which people banded together and cared about each other. Despite the fact that Dr. Ashwin Desai is of a totally different political persuasion, he too suggests something similar in the radio debate quoted above, where he states:

> "Apartheid put us in a thing, we pulled up bootstraps, we had grantee schools, we educated ourselves, and we overcame adversity. We couldn't get money from banks, we shared money, the extended families made us survive, we put people in medical schools, we built our community, we had a sense of homogeneity, and it worked." (Radio Lotus Talkshow with Dr Ashwin Desai and Guest Speaker Professor Thomas Hanson, 24 June 1999)

Here a cautionary note is advised as Bennett (1920:224) reminds us that the representation of the past remains "forever changing", because the gap between the record and the past "as it really was" is never bridged.

Eternal/Timeless Essence

In response to an Indian radio personality's view that Indian-ness does not exist, many articles asserted the existence of an "authentic" Indian-ness. The following is the article that appeared where Ms Karajan Govender proclaimed that Madonna is more Indian than she is (See Appendix F for complete newspaper article). In a letter to the Editor Ms Govender stated that:

> "I do not consider myself to be an Indian as I was born in Africa. My ancestors may well have been Indians but that does not mean I have to embrace the culture and traditions of India. I am, for all intents and purposes, an African." (*The Sunday Tribune*, 30 April 1999)

A public debate ensued. The responses posit Indian-ness as a state of being, of eternal and timeless values:

> "As far as Indians are concerned, religion is the core of our culture because it informs every sphere of life, our morality, ethics, values, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, music, literature, philosophy, medicine, the sciences, politics, environmental attitudes, etc. Not only is ours 'a lofty culture' as Gandhi proclaimed, but in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: 'I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours and I am conscious that I, too, like all of us, I am a link in the unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it." (Ms Bharathi Pillay, Verulam, *Daily News*, 5 November 2000)

In diasporic Indian communities, many Indian immigrants seek to recreate their own timeless and authentic India. In taking culture to be an assortment of fragmentary but clearly definable practices and customs, they see the preservation of such cultural essence as a domain that can, and needs to be, defended against outside intervention. Very often the enemy of this timeless essence is viewed as Western intervention and contamination of Indian values. Many cultural leaders interviewed for this research saw Westernisation as a threat to the Indian essence. Westernisation was not the only threat; the African value system was also seen to threaten Indian-ness. In an interview with Dr T.P. Naidoo, the Director of the "Indian Academy", Dr Naidoo expressed concern over the fusion of Indian and African dance forms, "...such fusion of dance I find deeply offensive and worrying as it "contaminates" the traditional and pure Indian forms of dance" (Interview with Dr TP Naidoo, 3 October 1999). This perception is symptomatic of attempts to safeguard Indian dance from contamination from outside sources.

The individuals here define their Indian-ness according to something that is intrinsic to them, an eternal and "unbroken" link to their 'motherland'. The narrative is of an essentialised, pure, primordial narrative identity.

Charitable Nature

The following is an excerpt of an interview with Mr Bramdaw where he accentuates the "charitable nature" of South African Indians. Here the Indian is viewed as almost genetically predisposed to charity - it is their intrinsic nature to be charitable.

> **Mr Bramdaw** : 'The thing is I think that my figures may be out of date now but I will say 85 % of the Indians are working class and of the remainder you know the maybe 10 or maybe 16 % would be middle-class and … 4 % would be wealthy. There is a different perception that people may have and I think that it is the wrong perception. However the Indian is or has been very caring of their resources, they built themselves through saving, through helping one another through family support which may not be prevalent in other societies. So the advances made have been done through personal sacrifice so we stand out as great achievers but the means of achievement are not fully understood and therefore they just have an idea that Indians are wealthy.
>
> Certainly you know they save and even if I look back in time you know the small contribution that working class people made to various societies and organisations to build a temple or build a hall or to build an old age home or to provide care for orphans is inspired by religion. But you know people responded with their small mite on a weekly basis. I don't know if you know what a tickey is, that shows how the Indians sort of helped FOSA and Child Welfare you know financially. They gave their tickeys and sixpence on a weekly basis or a monthly basis. And somebody would go around and collect it, small amounts of money but they made it and you know any society can do that, but why were we so successful in getting the poor to help the poor? Because that is what it was? It wasn't …well the rich came along and they gave big lumps but poor people was also giving their tickeys and pennies.'
>
> **Aline**: 'Has this changed?'
>
> **Mr Bramdaw**: 'I think that in that small way yes, I think that Indian does - I don't think that the Indian has changed, in its value system. Certainly big business can contribute in huge amounts but the individual on that level is contributing. I may say something adverse and I don't know whether that is relevant to what you are researching. You know you have a host of Indian personalities, businessmen, the professionals who have made sizeable contributions to the well-being and upliftment of society at large and you see R.K. Khan Hospital, M.L. Sultan Technikon and schools being named after so many different people but if you look at some of the

other communities of people who are now in a position to earn R500 000 a month through government positions or they may even be millionaires many times over, and we are not seeing any contributions from that type of people. Now I would think that there's great need for people of wealth, people generating wealth you know from public office that should perhaps be contributing in some way and we don't hear of it. And its something that really exercises my mind sometimes and I haven't come up with any of the answers." (Interview with Mr Bramdaw, 18 May 2001)

Mr Bramdaw suggests that Indians are naturally "charitable" but not because they are rich, which he argues is a common racist stereotype about Indians. He suggests that Indians are charitable, despite the lack of finances that some of the South African Indian population have access to. There is a binary in operation here, where Indians are projected as being fundamentally hard-working, charitable, despite their economic hardships. These essentialist statements about Indians contrast them with other racial groups and seek to set them apart, by highlighting the differences between them. The differences between the racial groupings are negative, with Indians being seen as charitable and other racial groups as "selfish". This binary thinking is indicative of identity formulations, where explicit reference is made to in-group and out-group relations.[53] The theoretical literature suggests that "The construction of identity ... involves the construction of opposites and others whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'." (Said, 1994:332), and this is clearly true here.

These essentialised constructions of identities are indicative of the images South African Indians utilize in order to understand their place in the "new" South Africa. Constructions of difference like these clearly partake in the textual strategy of "categorisation", where one identity is created in opposition to another.

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[53] This is not to suggest that this is not the case, history provides numerous examples where South African Indians have contributed to a large extent to charities, such as the ones Mr Bramdaw alludes to.

Mahatma Ghandi Influence and Resistance

Analysis of the media material and interviews suggest that the influence of

Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha and passive resistance is invoked in constructions

of authentic and essential Indian-ness, exemplifying the "good" nature of Indians

and their courage in resisting oppression. The Mahatma Gandhi legacy is viewed

as an intrinsic part of "authentic" Indian culture as Mr Ronnie Govender argues:

> **Mr Ronnie Govender**: "... I think we need to say; surely we must pass on
> the great spiritual truths of Mahatma Gandhi which is part of our heritage,
> which is tremendous. That great soul Mahatma knew that violence was
> not the answer to violence, and that change had to be brought about by
> non-violent means." (Interview with Mr Ronnie Govender, 1 October
> 2002)

Even when Mahatma Ghandi is not explicitly cited, (non-violent) resistance or

courage is seen as an intrinsic part of Indian culture. Mr Marlan Padayachee, a

political journalist, suggests that when South African Indians have been placed in

situations that were not optimal for their survival, they have displayed resistance

and overcome the oppressor through hard work. Interestingly, he views this

ability to resist on their belonging to an ancient culture:

> **Mr Marlan Padayachee**: "... As I have stated in that article, initially
> when Indians found that they were being victimized by Group Areas Act,
> they were being squeezed out economically, meaning that they couldn't
> make a living of their businesses etc then they didn't find it as an excuse
> or an opportunistic act ... they didn't find it in those days in the 1920s, 30s
> and 40s, they were genuinely persecuted by a hostile Afrikaner
> government that was ready to pack them back to India ...
>
> And such is the nature of Indians; they wanted human equality and
> dignity. That is the culture they come from, they were just not ordinary
> semi-slaves and these guys must have been teachers or whatever. They
> were definitely cultured, they come from an ancient culture, so studies
> have to be done on the 1860 to really bring them out ... The point I am
> making when Indians got involved in the early resistance struggles, it was
> out of a log jam situation, they were pushed into a corner ..." (Interview
> with Mr Marlan Padaychee, 7 October 2002)

The case study of the 1860 Heritage Foundation, presented below, develops these points further.

Morality

"Morality", too, is cited as an intrinsic part of the Indian culture. In the quotation below, the Indian community is seen to have a low crime rate because it adheres to its culture:

> "When our forefathers came over as indentured labourers, all they had was their culture and their language and they instilled its importance into us. Those two things kept the Indian community together and helped us maintain a high moral standing. We have a very low crime rate because of that. If we want to keep that up, we must instill the same language and culture in moulding our children. Morality plays a vital part in the new South Africa ..." (Sarojini Moodley, Tamil vernacular teacher, *Indigo*, May 1999)

Cultural leaders have pointed to a state of moral degeneration within the South African Indian community and blame it on a loss of culture and thus values. There is a call for the community to return to its roots and thus escape the downward spiral. Farouk Khan puts this very strongly:

> **Mr Farouk Khan**: So the Indian themselves have committed intellectual suicide, they have become figurines of the West, they have thrown away their religion, they have thrown away their culture, they have thrown away traditions, they have thrown away their lifestyle. Where did you ever see in the world children kicking out parents out of their homes, forcing their parent to sign their homes into their names, you tell me where do you find Indians anyway. I know of Indians who are in the United States who are staying there for thirty years, they still speak Hindi, the current Ms India who lives in the United States spoke fluent Hindi with me on Saturday night, I was staggered and stunned and then if I look at South African Indian ladies, Tamil or Telegu or Muslim can't speak any of the vernacular languages, so what do you want? ...' (Interview with Mr Farouk Khan, 1 December 2000)

Morality is seen as an intrinsic part of the Indian culture, and its loss signals the end of the community. In the above quote, this is viewed as being linked to the loss of language. The impact of Westernisation is often cited as the reason for the moral degeneration of the South African Indian community and even for the

spread of AIDS. Take, for example, the response of a caller to the Radio Lotus talkshow:

> **Praneel Singh**: "Indians are living okay; the only problem is that the Westernised ideas are wrecking our lives up. People are committing suicide, people are using drugs, terrible clothes, and morality is dying *that is why we got AIDS because we are not following our culture*. You know the saying that one out of four in Natal are HIV positive ... that's the Indian people too because they are not following their culture ... if they followed their culture they will know that they mustn't sleep around until they get married. In our cultural way when my children get married we are going to arrange the marriage, because the children won't fool around and my children won't get AIDS now, what's happening they're testing it out on partners *that's why they getting AIDS, they got no culture*." (Radio Lotus Talkshow, "What does it mean to be Indian?," 20 July 1999)

Industrious/Hard-Working

Stereotypes of all racial groups abound and this study demonstrates only a few of them. As has already emerged in some of the above quotes, the industrious and hard-working nature of Indians is one of these. Both in the media and in the interviews with cultural leaders, the stereotype that Indians are hard-working was common and it created a binary in much the same way as the stereotype of the "charitable" Indian.

> **Mr Bramdaw**: 'Yes they are eager, yes of course. I think by nature the Indian is somebody who's keen on advancement in many fields and they have an aptitude for certain things, many things. So with pressures in India being what they are, I think they have had to move across the world and this in fact created a network of, you know, the Indians, and if I may use the term diaspora to describe it and I think that there's a bit of a debate about the use of the term diaspora. People can network and they are communicating with one another and... well they speak a common language if I may say so, and they have a common heritage by and large. So there's great potential." (Interview with Mr Bramdaw, 18 May 2001)

This quotation by Mr Bramdaw suggests that Indians are genetically predisposed to being hard-working, an essentialist statement about Indians.

> **Aline**: "What do you think defines Indian-ness?"

> **Mr Bramdaw** : "Certainly not eating curry and rice as the yardstick, that's the - comments like that, I thought it must have been the media playing it [this is a reference to a newspaper comment by Prof. Adam

Habib] … I think that we have a lot that makes us Indians and I think that it comes out in the way that the fact you can put an Indian in a society and he can start from scratch wherever he is and within a short space of time, he makes his presence felt and people start to look up to this person and suddenly - he came up from nowhere and suddenly he has made his mark in society or within a community, and I think that is because he carries with him some things of very good value …" (Interview with Mr Bramdaw, 18 May 2001)

Thus far this section has discussed the 6 themes identifiable in the discourse of Indian-ness, namely a romanticised past, eternal/timeless essence, charitable nature, Mahatma Gandhi influence and resistance, morality and industrious/hard-working. All point to the creation of a pure cultural identity infused with good values and traditions. These Indian essences are further utilised in the creation and establishment of the 1860 Heritage Foundation.

5.3   Case Study: The 1860 Heritage Foundation

Many of the themes discussed above come together in the conceptualisation of, and views within, the 1860 Heritage Foundation. Material on this Foundation is appropriately placed in this section on discourses of Indian-ness since it is indicative of the attempt to create and maintain a broad, homogenous Indian-ness. The search for an authentic Indian-ness is surely demonstrated through the existence of an organisation that seeks to commemorate and celebrate the achievement and existence of South African Indians.

The 1860 Heritage Foundation is an organisation that is set up to remember the struggles of South African Indians, in particular the indentured labourers. Generally it holds an annual function commemorating the arrival of Indians into South Africa on the 15 November 1860. In an interview with Mr Krish Gokool, the chairman of the 1860 Heritage Foundation, he said:

"For the past 35 years, the 1860 Heritage Foundation, formerly the 1860 Settler's Association, has been paying homage to our forefathers by organising an annual thanksgiving ceremony at Durban's Addington beach. We invite residents of old age homes and members of pension

clubs to participate in this important ceremony. Some of these elderly people are first generation descendents and it is important that there is some form of commemoration. The older generation of Indians feel fulfilled that there is some effort being made to preserve our heritage. The commemoration holds little significance for the youth of the community because they seem to have other priorities ..." (Interview with Mr Krish Gokool, 28 November 2000)

One of the main aims of the foundation was to establish a monument to commemorate the arrival of Indians in South Africa. As Mr Rajbansi adds:

> "...The Foundation is doing wonderful work. South Africa should preserve the heritage of all cultures, with Indians being no exception. The arrival, the struggles and the role of the Indian community should be preserved at all costs. Our forefathers fought long and hard in this country and our achievements should be acknowledged..." (Interview with Mr A Rajbansi, 15 November 2000)

A diametrically opposed view came from Mr Strini Moodley, a political activist and former freedom fighter. In his view, it has been wrong to confine the commemoration of the anniversary of the arrival of the early Indian pioneers to the Indian community, as this decision will only serve to exacerbate the rifts between the cultural groups in South Africa:

> "The anniversary celebration should not be an event that is organised and commemorated exclusively by the Indian community, for the Indian community. Such an event must be used as a platform to bring all the communities together, so that the past can be remembered in solidarity. It cannot be a form of self-indulgence for members of the Indian community, but rather an exercise to consolidate people to appreciate and understand the history and heritage. I have not seen any tangible endeavour by Indian cultural organisations to reach out to the African community, in particular, and include them in the celebrations. I, like most members of the community, don't stop to really think about the actual arrival of the pioneers. While the organisers and participants of such an event may not realise it, *they are actually promoting ethnicity, which does not auger well in a country struggling to bring about unity of diverse communities.* This event must not be seen in a narrow context, it is in fact part of the history of our nation, rather than confined just to the Indian community. We need to draw on all these experiences and put them into one melting pot to create a culture unique to South Africa. I would like to see a cultural organisation that reflects all the cultures and ethnic groups in one body, so that we can educate one another about our history, culture, traditions and language." (Strini Moodley, *Post*, 19 November 2000)

Cultural organisations like the 1860 Heritage Foundation, Moodley suggests, do not contribute to the nation-building project, in that they focus their efforts on being exclusive to one ethnic group, disregarding the other racial groups. Moodley cautions that there is danger in this approach since, by being exclusivist, proponents of the rediscovery of an "authentic" Indian-ness are also setting themselves apart from the rest of the Indian community. In addition, efforts such as these work to isolate the Indian community from broader South African society.

It is clear that in perpetuating an idea of a unique Indian-ness in South African society and making blatant references to the contributions of South African Indians to South Africa, organizations such as the 1860 Heritage Foundation are attempting to emphasise difference for strategic gain. By uniting as a community that is feeling marginalised, ethnic difference is being used as a marker for political gain. Perhaps in this case, as in others described above, the assertion of an "authentic" of essentialist Indian identity is "strategic". However, critics such as Mr Moodley would argue that this does not make it any less real or its effects any less potentially divisive. The strategic articulation of an "essentialist" identity in a basically "hybrid" situation is discussed further in the next section, as well as in Chapter 6.

5.5   Defending "Indian-ness":   The Struggle over Indian Languages

Sociologists note that language is often cited as a major component of a separate identity, and language undoubtedly constitutes the most prominent single characteristic feature of ethnic identity. The manipulation of language as a status marker can also be used by individuals to change how they are defined ethnically (De Vos, 1995). It is suggested here that the contestation over Indian languages can be seen as an attempt by cultural entrepreneurs to carve out an Indian-ness in South Africa, thus further creating and preserving an essentialist identity. Further

this contestation is also symbolic of a larger struggle to preserve an Indian identity which many South African Indians believe is in crisis in South Africa due to their minority status.

During the period under review, there have been significant changes with respect to the teaching of Indian languages, and these changes have been perceived as an attack on the "essentialist" identity of South African Indians through the weakening of Indian culture. This section considers the recent and continuing efforts by some groups of Indians in Durban to gain government funding to continue teaching Indian languages in schools and universities (the University of Durban-Westville in particular), and examines the themes that emerge from the public debate over the issue.

5.5.1 Indian Languages in South Africa: A Context

The lack of Indian students wanting to learn Indian languages is cited as the reason for the closure of the "Indian Languages" Department at the University of Durban-Westville closing down. Indian languages are also no longer to be offered as subjects at government schools after 2006. The argument is that the teaching of Indian languages should be progressively phased out as many South African Indians are not conversant in them. The following figures, extracted from South Africa's official statistics for 1997-98, show the stated home language among "Indian" South Africans. They are self-explanatory.

Table 3: Home Language versus Number of People

Home Language	Number of People	%
English	600 565	73.3
Afrikaans	10 010	1.2
Tamil	13 020	1.6
Hindi	14 739	1.8
Telegu	1 875	0.2
Gujurati	17 757	2.2
Urdu	7 679	0.9
English + vernacular language, same proportion	1 598	0.2
English + vernacular language, English dominant	90 930	11.1
English + Tamil, Tamil dominant	8 105	1
English + Hindi, Hindi dominant	7 281	0.9
English + Telegu	1 134	0.1
English + Gujurati, Gurjurati + dominant	7 031	0.9
English + Urdu, Urdu dominant	4 303	0.5
Others (Mehmon, Konkani)	33 175	4

In addition I undertook my own survey at the University of Natal Durban during 2002 using (See Appendix D) a sample of 45 students. 100 % indicated that English is the spoken language at home, 20 % indicating that they also spoke other languages, such as Tamil (9 %), Hindi (9 %) and Gujerati (1 %). Clearly English is the predominantly spoken language in most if not all Indian homes, and the government is correct in their analysis of the situation to suggest that there are low enrolment rates for Indian languages at schools.

However the situation cannot be merely a debate about the economies of scale. This is a highly emotive issue. South African Indians express their anxiety about the scrapping of Indian languages from the syllabus since many views it as a constituent element of their cultural identity. Groups within the Indian community see attempts to phase out Indian languages as symptomatic of

government's attempt to sideline Indians in South Africa. It is argued that the state through its political ideology also tried to de-Indianise the South African Indian population.

For example, Mr Ram Maharaj, a member of ELAC and the President of the South African Hindu Dharma Sabha sees the new developments as part of a longer process of forced "de-Indianization" in which the South African government has attempted to break down the Indian community:

> "An aggressive process of 'de-Indianization' was launched with Indians being forced to adopt the English code of dress, mannerisms and speech. Mother-tongue education was effectively and totally ignored." (Interview with Mr Ram Maharaj, 30 October 2000)

In a letter to the editor of *Post*, Ms Saleem Moosa voiced his disgust at the fact that while Indian languages have been pulled out of the curriculum, Indian learners are still "forced" to learn Zulu:

> "I am disgusted with this attempt to remove Indian languages as a school subject. The blame for this move must lie squarely on the shoulders of the Minister of Education. He needs to be reminded that our constitution allows for the rights of all the people of this country. I believe that parents must unite and show our disappointment with this move by not paying the exorbitant school fees which have been introduced to make up for the non-payment by the disadvantaged black pupils in our schools. The irony is that while we learn the Zulu language at school, which appears to be unaffected, our mother-tongue language faces discontinuation. This is not fair."(Mr. Saleem Moosa, 40, Newlands West", *Post*, 11-14 November 1998)

In the following analysis of the struggle over Indian languages in South African schools, two major role-players are identified, namely the state, and South African Indians. South African Indians can be broken down into two further categories that are individuals and cultural organisations trying to preserve the Indian language. (Many individuals of course do not see the need to preserve the Indian languages in South Africa). This struggle then can be seen as a symbolic issue which represents a challenge to the hegemonic culture. Government funding to teach Indian languages at schools is sought because it constitutes one way of

obtaining control over resources - and in pursuit of this, it is strategic to assert a distinctive "Indian" identity.

As noted, the key role-players are government, and cultural organizations.

Government

The national government's response to the cut-back of funding to Eastern Languages has been to argue that the latter was in any case not a sustainable option. As noted, many Indians are not conversant in Indian languages and demonstrate their unwillingness to learn (since many classes are vacant or have poor attendance). The fact that Indian languages are disappearing is incontrovertible (Ebrahim - Vally, 2001). The beginning of this process can be traced back to the first decades of Indian settlement in South Africa. The demise of Indian languages was as a result of the need to communicate in the languages most dominantly used, which are English and Afrikaans.

The constitution does recognise Indian languages; however these are seen as "minority" languages. On p.2 of the Founding Provisions of the Constitution of South Africa, it is stated under Languages 6(2) and (5) a, b, c, and d, respectively:

> "Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must:
> a) Promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of-
> b)   i. All Official languages
>   ii. the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and
>   iii. sign language
> c) Promote and ensure respect for-
>   i. all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, *Gujurati, Hindi,* Portuguese, *Tamil, Telegu and Urdu*; and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

The National Education Minister Professor, Kader Asmal, plans to end the teaching of Indian languages, recently defined by the Education Department as

"foreign" at schools, by 2006. Asmal announced in January 2004 that he intended stopping the teaching of certain languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Telegu and Gujurati. Languages that were saved from the proposed cuts were French, Arabic, German, Portuguese, Italian and Spanish. These languages will continue to be taught at schools because they are considered international languages. In a press statement, Professor Asmal issued the following clarifications:

> "...the Ministry of Education, Prof. Asmal pointed out that certain media reports suggesting that the Ministry is 'culling' languages in the new curriculum from grades 10 to 12 is completely inaccurate and distorts the position of the Ministry on this matter. He said that only a fraction of his responses have been carried in print media. The press statement further stated that languages that are listed in the current policy will continue to be offered by the Department of Education until the new curriculum from grades 10 to 12 is introduced. The Government ensures that languages that were marginalized by apartheid enjoy a parity of esteem in our system. However, this goal is dependent on the availability of funds. In a study conducted by the Department of Education on the uptake of foreign languages in grades 10 to 12, a significant number of these languages have had very low enrolment rates." (*Phoenix Tabloid*, 8 July 2003)

The National Department of Education has made its position clear: they have decided that from 2006, it will not fund the teaching of Indian languages, due to "low enrolment rates".

Eastern Languages Action Committee

Another key role-player is the Eastern Languages Action Committee (formerly the Institute of Indian Languages), established in 1983. It was set up to represent the national organisations that were responsible at a community level for the promotion of different Indian languages in South Africa. The Institute's function has been to liaise with the Education authorities in matters concerning the welfare of all Indian languages taught in schools. The different bodies it represents are:

- Andra Maha Sabha of South Africa: Telegu
- Arabic Study Circle: Arabic
- Buzme Adab: Urdu
- South African Gujurati Mahaparishad: Gujurati
- Hindi Shiksha Sangh of South Africa: Hindi

- South African Tamil Federation: Tamil

- University of Durban Westville: Sanskrit

The following is a campaign message from the Institute of Indian Languages, issued in January 1998:

Box 5: Message from the "Institute of Indian Languages"

The year 1994 heralded a new beginning for South Africa. It declared our country a rainbow nation, which houses a multi-cultural community.
Maintaining this beautiful concept of the rainbow nation is in the hands of every loyal South Africa. We the people of Indian origin must make a meaningful contribution to our country.

Our immediate focus must be – OUR LANGUAGE. We have to date, succeeded in preserving our religion and culture under difficult conditions. It is a universal truth that a culture cannot be considered pure if its medium of communication is the language of another culture.

In the new democratic South Africa there are opportunities for us to learn our language at school, university and in the community. While the new national policy on education encouraged us to learn more than one official language, it does not prescribe any one official language as compulsory. Thus Afrikaans is no longer a compulsory language.

An Eastern language, though not listed among the official languages of the country can be taken on the higher grade and is one of the six subjects required for a matriculation exemption according to the new national education policy.

Your language is not only your birthright but also your constitutional right as well. The Institute requests you to help mobilise your local community. Let us together make a concerted effort to ensure that our children are encourages learning our language. We owe it to them. In this way we will undoubtedly make a positive contribution to the rainbow nation.

DID YOU KNOW...
YOUR LANGUAGE IS YOUR BIRTHRIGHT AND YOUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT?
EASTERN LANGUAGES ARE RECOGNISED AS SCHOOL SUBJECTS BY THE CONSTITUTION?
PUPILS CAN STUDY AN EASTERN LANGUAGE FROM STANDARD TWO TO STANDARD EIGHT?
EASTERN LANGUAGES CAN BE TAKEN AS DEGREE COURSES AT UNIVERSITY (U.D.W.)?
YOUR RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ROOTS LIE IN YOUR LANGUAGE?

Support the INSTITUTE ... Let us mobilise ... Contact your local school principal ... Ask for your language to be offered to your children.

Issued by: The Institute of Indian Languages (Incorporating Arabic, Gujurati, Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu) and the Department of Indian languages (U.D.W)

ELAC is a community driven organization comprising of interested and affected parties inclusive of cultural leaders. The main function of the Institute has been to liaise with the relevant education authorities on matters concerning Indian languages at schools. In addition to schools, university departments teaching Indian languages at the University of Durban-Westville have recently been closed down, a move that

significantly exacerbated tensions. In an interview with Dr Veena Lutchman, the Chairperson of ELAC, she outlined the vision of the Committee:

> **Dr Veena Lutchman**: "… We are talking about the Institute of Indian Languages. That has representatives from all the Indian languages that are Urdu, Arabic, Tamil, Telegu, Hindi, and Gujurati… And, this is very much a community organization and we began immediately after 1994. We made several representations, well obviously first to the constitution to make sure the languages are recognized which they already had, but they needed some kind of backup from the community. We liaised with various stakeholders and many other cultural leaders to try and get all of the languages constituted properly in schools with proper teachers.
>
> And, you know, Vincent Zulu, we've had often meetings with him but, I think it's a very much politicized thing. There were prepared to meet us just before elections, regional and otherwise. And immediately after the routine, the first question that was asked was do you want us to go to the press or are you going to go to the press. So I think clearly the support from government level is not there. You probably think it's a non-issue." (Interview with Dr Veena Lutchman, 3 November 2000)

Lutchman feels that support from government is non-existent and the matter is generally treated as unimportant. She feels it only becomes an issue for political gain that is the matter of Indian languages is taken seriously only at election time.

5.5.2 Challenging the "Foreignness" of Indian Languages

On the one hand, then, Indian languages are viewed as a core component of Indian-ness and thus their preservation and maintenance is a means of ensuring the survival of Indian culture. On the other hand, government argues that since most South African Indians do not even speak their vernacular languages as indicated by the low enrolment rates, the need to continue teaching them is unnecessary and the languages have therefore been termed "foreign". Yet due to this designation of "foreignness", South African Indians feel further alienated in South African society, their historical "alien status" exacerbated. The "culling" of Indian languages for many South African Indians is symptomatic of their marginalisation in South African society and they are determined to challenge this notion. The grounds on which they do so are interesting and, in many cases, reflect the assertion of an "authentic" or "essentialist" Indianness, irrespective of whether or not the languages are widely spoken.

An academic and social commentator who is involved in the cultural affairs of South African Indians had the following to say about the closing of the Indian languages department at UDW:

> **Aline**: "The Eastern Languages Department that was closed down, what did you think about that? Is it still necessary for us Indians to learn our language?"
>
> **Dr Anand Singh**: "Well first of all let me say that my views on the closure of these Departments have become public because of the way in which I was attacked by the Vice-Chancellor. I was opposed to the closure of the Departments because there are a fair number of Hindus as well as other Indians, irrespective of their religious background who are still inclined towards their languages. And a very good indication of that is the extent to which Indians follow Hindu movies, make Indian movie stars their idols, and also veer towards visiting India before they would want to visit any other part of the world. And to that extent language becomes an important basis for communication with people in India.
>
> But also it's a question of identity. Many people have shed their identity, can only speak English and don't want to have anything to do with the Indian languages. One respects that, but just as one respects that position, one should also respect the positions of those that want to see the language survive.
>
> And I think also in terms of diversity in this particular region, it would be foolish to try to homogenize a very diverse set of people in a particular region because diversity and a cosmopolitan culture of any region can only be strength. So to get rid of languages are as far as I am concerned is nothing less than ethnocentric. And it shows total insensitivity to people who have lost their languages not out of sheer will, but upon impositions placed on them by colonialists and by strategists of apartheid. And now to see a post-apartheid government professing to be giving all communities a fair chance for cultural development but on the face of it actually ignoring the development and support of languages, that is nothing but double standards. And yes to answer your question, should people know their respective languages, yes I encourage my children to go and learn Hindi and they are learning it, they like the language." (Interview with Dr Anand Singh, 17 November 2000)

In the South African context, since the early 1990's ELAC has taken the issue of Indian languages to various public organisations. The following article encapsulates

the struggle to acknowledge Indian languages:

Box 6: Indian Languages should not wither and die in SA

(*Natal Mercury*, 06/01/98)

By Ismail Meer is a member of the KwaZulu-Natal Parliament and President of the Democratic Education Advancement League (Deal)

When will the Pan South African Language Board, envisaged in Section 5 of the South African constitution, come into operation to "promote and ensure respect for" such languages such as Tamil, Hindi, Telegu, Gujurati, Urdu, Arabic and Sanskrit? This is a pertinent question if democratic South Africa is to give recognition to these languages, besides accepting nine African languages as official languages with English and Afrikaans. Our constitution also gives recognition to the German, Greek and Portuguese languages, all of which are not facing extinction but are flourishing in schools where the medium of instruction is in one of these European languages.

Tamil, Hindi, Gujurati and Urdu are languages which are no more extensive "home languages" and past neglect during the white minority rule of over three hundred years may, it is feared, put them in the same peril in which in the Cape, under Dutch rule, the Bengali and Malay languages suffered. It is important to recall that 52 % of the foreign slaves in the Cape of early Dutch rule had come from Bengal in India, and there was a large Malay-speaking population drawn from Java, Sumatra and elsewhere, where the home language was Malaysian.

Under Dutch colonial rule both the Bengali and the Malay languages died from official neglect ... But Afrikaans, the language of the white minority rule, was developed with financing from public funds, to which the disadvantaged also contributed.

The 1996 Constitution recognises nine African languages as official languages. In KwaZulu-Natal, besides English and Afrikaans, we have Zulu as the third official language of the province, and thus we have now given recognition to Zulu as the language in which we also make our provincial laws.

The Language Board is established by national legislation and its main task is to promote all official languages, the sign language and the Khoi, Nama and San Languages also. As far as the Indian and Arabic languages are concerned, much will depend on how the Board will promote them.

Afrikaans faced serious difficulties under the English rule in the colonies and even under the Union, which came in to existence in 1910. In 1924, General Hertzog gave Afrikaans support in the form of millions of rands of public funds.

This kind of support cannot be expected in the present era of equality. The present Government cannot develop any languages at the expense of other languages. In this situation the Pan South African Language Board has a difficult but just role to perform.

With Tamil, Telegu, Hindi, Gujurati and Urdu, a lot of work is required, because these languages are often not spoken at home, where English has come to predominate. There are hardly any publications in these languages, when, in the past, there were a greater number.

We have, however, a great desire to preserve and promote these languages, and there was a positive contribution in schools under the House of Delegates. Arabic and Sanskrit are taught at the University of Durban-Westville, and they will most likely continue to be taught there.

There are bodies which promote other languages, more particularly the Hindi, Tamil, Telegu and Gujurati and these bodies can work closely with the language board to reach its goal.

We now have the machinery created in our constitution to prevent the death of more languages, after the sad demise of Bengali and Malay languages. We want the Pan South African Language Board to succeed in the democratic South Africa.

The Pan South African Language Board (PANSAL) is a body to which ELAC has made representations in order to preserve Indian languages, on the premise that although they are not spoken widely amongst South African Indians, they are heritage languages. As already noted, in the context of language teaching in schools, this met with little success. In a memorandum to the then National Minister of Education, Professor S. Bhengu, in 1996, ELAC outlined some of its main concerns, namely:

- "We are aware of the present dialogue on mother-tongue, community and heritage languages. Although Asian languages are considered to be heritage languages, it must be brought to your attention that the adoption of English as a mother-tongue by the Indians in this country was not by choice. The Cape Town Agreement of 1927 is proof of this sentiment. The Indian voice was a disempowered voice from the outset, and it is a concern that this may continue;

- Although the constitution describes South Africa as a multilingual nation, discussions on multilingualism seem to exclude the minority languages. As a result of this, Eurocentric mindsets cultivated during the past regime remain and this has proved significant in stalling noteworthy progress in the Indian languages;

- We support strongly the motion that two official languages be compulsory courses in the schools' curriculum. However we strongly condemn the fact that students are still compelled to study languages that are of not relevance to them; for example, in KwaZulu-Natal, students should be taught Zulu. However Afrikaans remains a compulsory language. Further, circulars that have been sent to schools, have placed Zulu as a choice to Indian languages. This goes totally against the issue of Indian languages.

- In spite of promises that irregularities of the past will be addressed, it has been found that nothing has been done to address the issue of Indian languages..." (See APPENDIX F for full content)

ELAC has made numerous representations to cultural and other public organisations, but the situation finally came to a head when, as already explained, Professor Kader Asmal decided to "cull" Indian languages in schools by 2006 and thus remove funding. This led to outrage in the Indian community as reflected in the public sphere. The following is a list of captions of newspaper articles dealing with the Indian language crisis that reveal the nature and extent of the debate.

- "ANC give preference to languages of colonisers" (*Sunday Times Extra*, 6 July 1998)
- "Indian Languages to go-Minority Indian languages face the axe, (*Sunday Tribune*, November 1, 1998)
- "Language should not be an issue in an multi-ethnic SA" (*Post*, 11-14 November 1998)
- "Ways to save Indian languages - Start on the Home Front" (*Post*, 18-21 November 1998)

- "Indian leaders ready to battle over languages" (*Sunday Tribune*, 15 November, 1998)
- "Deal is reached on Eastern Language classes" (*Post*, 18-21 November 1998)
- "Indian languages appeal" (*Daily News*, October 3, 1999)
- "Indians should not rely on others" (*Natal Mercury*, Letter to the Editor, 2-5 December 1999)
- "Few Takers for Indian Languages" (*The Leader*, 4 August 2000)
- "Community's value systems hinge on mother languages" (*The Leader*, 11 August 2000)
- "Every linguistic group has the right to preserve its language" (Letter to the Editor, *Sunday Times Extra*, 26 May 2002)
- " Community mobilises over language issue" (*Daily News*, 15 January 2003)
- "Our duty is to keep the flames of our fathers burning" (*Post*, 18-20 June 2003)
- "Row over Indian Languages at Schools" (*Daily News*, 20 June 2003)
- "Front formed to foster languages"(*Post*, 9-11 July 2003)

The highly emotive language employed in the captions highlights the heated nature of contestation over Indian languages between the South African government and Indians: "Community *mobilises* over language issue", "Indian Languages to go - Minority Indian languages *face the axe*" and "Indian leaders ready to *battle* over languages". Clearly terms or phrases such as "mobilize", "face the axe" and "battle" indicate that the issue is volatile: South African Indians are called to take up the task of fighting for retention of the Indian languages.

Highlighted in the public debate on Indian languages is the fact that *Indian language is constructed as the core of the Indian culture*. Essentially the contestation of Indian languages revolves around preserving Indian languages to preserve Indian culture. Below three themes are identified that deconstruct the debate on the issue of Indian languages and expose the various arguments used in order to put the case for Indian languages. Interestingly, many of these arguments assert an essentialist Indian cultural identity in the public sphere. They are:

- Indian languages are necessary for Indian cultural identity
- The apartheid system destroyed Indian languages

- Indians should not rely on others

Indian languages are necessary for Indian cultural identity

For many commentators and participants in the media debates, preservation of Indian languages is seen as tantamount to preserving Indian culture. Pat Poovalingum, a well-known social commentator and lawyer, makes a connection between babyhood, the awakening of identity, and the "mother" tongue. The gendered language is fascinating:

> **Aline**: "The Indian languages, why do think that it is important for us to be able to speak our Indian languages?"
>
> **Pat Poovalingum**: "The language is a vehicle of communication and a person's mother tongue is important to a person because ..."
>
> **Aline**: "I think that it is one's link with culture."
>
> **Pat Poovalingum**: "No no, when this fellow was at this woman's, mother or her mother's breast, what language did he or she hear? The mother's language and that's the first language the child ever learns, that is why it is called mother tongue, right? And you naturally love best that which you associated with in your childhood, right? So and naturally every person loves best his mother tongue. A Telegu speaking person will love best Telegu language, Tamil speaking person because that is the language he or she first became acquainted with. What is the sweetest sound ever to a child? The mother's voice. What is the sweetest smile ever to a woman? Her baby's smile, that's the best thing that woman can ever enjoy, the smile of her child, the sweetest sound, why is it so to the child? That is the woman giving milk, that is all the child is interested in initially, the child doesn't love the mother the child wants the milk, the child is grabbing the mother right and hearing that sound, so while the child is getting the food he is hearing the sound, that is why the sweetest sound is your mother's tongue, mother language." (Interview with Mr Pat Poovalingum, 25 October 2000)

In the transcription above, Pat Poovalingum speaks about the importance of Indian language, metaphorically. He compares one's vernacular language to the need a child has for its mother. It is an eternal bond that can never be broken. Explanation for the need for vernacular languages for Pat Poovalingum is steeped in emotive and metaphorical language. In these metaphors and figures of speech the need for vernacular language is compared to the need for nourishment that the child has, or the need for comfort embodied in the figure of the mother.

The preservation of Indian language is commonly articulated as intrinsically linked to the preservation of Indian culture. An article in *The Leader*, for example, asserts this link by claiming: "Maintenance of the Indian languages is important to preserve identity and maintain solidarity, culture and religion in the community. We cannot deny our Indian heritage and the fact that we are Indian." (*The Leader*, 11 August 2000).

The media and interview analysis suggest that the loss of the vernacular language to South African Indian culture was perceived as a *threat* that would eventually result in the loss of culture and identity. Reponses in the media were multi-layered. Some respondents felt that the loss of Indian culture can be attributed to the influence of Westernisation:

> "Indian culture is already suffering under the influence of the Western world. To remove Indian languages as a school subject will just serve to worsen the problem. I do not agree with the notion that Indian language classes are poorly attended and therefore need to be scrapped. If Indian languages are offered, there will be children who will include their mother tongue in their curriculum. Even if it is just a few, I believe it is our right to have those languages at our schools." (Miss Arusha Budha, 19, Phoenix", *Post*, 11-14 November 1998)

Other respondents argued that it was imperative to pursue the teaching of Indian languages since many parents were not conversant in them and thus it would ensure that the younger generation was culturally located:

> It is essential that children of today learn our mother tongue and keep alive our rich culture. My generation lost our culture when it came to learning our mother tongue, and although we might understand the language, we do not know enough to teach our children. This will mean that children have no knowledge of our mother tongue whatsoever and will also lose touch with our culture. I think that they should make Indian languages an examination subject, since there are certain jobs like those offered by East-Net, Lotus FM and language translation which require a good understanding of the language." (Miss Nisha Maharaj, 28, Phoenix, *Post*, 11-14 November 1998)

On the other hand some members of the younger generation resent their parents' insistence on them learning the vernacular language, expressing in some cases a reluctance to learn. These struggles were captured quite succinctly in a

conversation I had with a younger cousin who attends a Model C school and is forced to attend vernacular language in the afternoon. His parents insisted that he learns Tamil, since they were not given an opportunity to do so. He said, "Why must I suffer because of their loss?"

On the 3rd October 1999, a conference in Pietermaritzburg organized by the Midlands Hindu Society attracted more than 600 delegates, representing Hindu religious and cultural organisations from around the country. The aim was to take stock of the community in all its facets. The key speaker was Dr Usha Desai who spoke on the "Importance of Mother Languages for Cultural and Religious Understanding" which in essence, encapsulates the concerns of many of the delegates. Desai relates the struggle for Indian languages to Africans' struggle to be taught in African indigenous languages:

> "In our rapidly changing South African society all the communities are involved in introspection and working towards better changes as per the new constitution. The crucial issue of identity has been brought to the forefront. The African community, in particular, is concerned about its language and culture." (*The Daily News*, 5 October 1999).

While languages have been recognized in South Africa's constitution, Desai continues, the translating of these rights into practical legislation and implementation presents the true challenge.

Loss of language, she argues, represents a serious loss of cultural identity: "The identity of each individual is very important to him/her and in turn it is a societal phenomenon to identify with a group. Culture, language and religion are closely related with this identity." Desai emphasizes the role of family in maintaining the language. To lose one's identity, she implies, will mean being "neither here not there" in the social milieu. "Acceptance of one's language and culture is a powerful force in the stability of identity", and for Desai, the erosion of language will mean a "gradual erosion of culture and identity."

The apartheid system destroyed Indian languages

Views expressed in the public sphere that seek to continue to teach Indian languages argue that South African Indians did not "choose" to be non-conversant in Indian languages but that Apartheid systematically destroyed the means to achieve this. An article in *Post* makes this case, and argues again for the essentialist connection between language, culture and identity:

> "By 1950 the Indian community had become well settled and loved among their own linguistic groups. A few examples of such communities were Stella Hill (largely Telegu speaking), Magazine Barracks (largely Tamil-speaking), Riverside and Clare Estate (Hindi settlement) and central Grey Street (Gujurati community).
>
> In these areas a typical home incorporating the joint family system in which grandparents, their married children, unmarried children and grandchildren all lived in the same house. Communication was usually in the ethnic mother tongue. The children too learnt to communicate in these languages.
>
> *Moreover in such settled communities Indian religio-cultural practices and education in the ethnic language of the areas were fostered.* In Magazine Barracks, for example, cultural events were regularly observed. The Tamil schools in the area were run by concerned individuals. A similar situation prevailed in most of the well-established and well-populated Indian settlements throughout KZN.
>
> The Ghetto Act and the Group Areas Act uprooted and devastated well-established communities. When the government relocated Indians, no efforts were made to resettle people according to their linguistic groups. This resulted in the disintegration of group identity. The laws also broke up the extended family system and the younger generation did not have the opportunity to communicate in their mother tongues with elder family members on a regular basis. From the time of Indians' arrival in SA, the ethnic teacher was an indentured labourer or a 'passenger Indian' and not a qualified tutor." (*Post*, 3 October 1999)

The argument is that, in addition to the Group Areas Act systematically destroying the nurturing of Indian languages, teaching was almost always done by someone who was "conversant" in the language as opposed to being "educated" in it. That is, Indian languages were usually taught by someone who has able to speak them as opposed to someone who learnt the formal rules and grammar etc of the language.

The other effects of apartheid on Indian languages are recalled by Professor

Fatima Meer, who also emphasizes their importance:

> "Many Indians were busy in the freedom fight. But these languages live
> with us and belong to us. How can we carry on a literary tradition without
> them? How can we learn a foreign literature and miss the literature of our
> own language?" (Interview with Professor Fatima Meer, 23 November
> 2000)

Dr Veena Lutchman adds that since many were involved in the freedom struggle

Indian languages was not a *bread and butter* issue; yet this did not mean it was

unimportant:

> **Dr Veena Lutchman**: "Ya, you see if you look at the importance of the
> language you've got to say, important in what way? As a bread and butter
> issue? In the South African context, maybe not. But if one looks at the
> kind of doors that India and South Africa have open to each other in terms
> of trade, it definitely makes a difference. But not to the extent, it cannot
> enjoy the same status as English in the market world in the market place.
>
> But in terms of holistic development of a person, it is definitely, you know
> … I think we tend to look at things too much from a bread and butter issue
> and not the issue holistically. I mean even right now with Isizulu, still
> there is so much of resistance from a lot of Indian parents themselves, they
> don't want their children to learn Isizulu and they just cannot see the
> bigger picture. And that is what is missing in this country, the bigger
> picture, you know. And it works both ways as well because if you look at
> some language communities they don't vocalize it forever. I desperately
> feel that Indian languages have been sidelined, I mean there's no two ways
> about it." (Interview with Dr Veena Lutchman, 3 November 2000).

The implication of these arguments is that Indian languages are not "foreign" to

South African Indians and the reasons they were lost were outside of the

community's control. Government support for Indian languages, then, could be

some reparation for what the Indian community lost during apartheid.

Indians should not rely on others

Other strands of the debate Indian languages recall the themes of Indian

essentialist identity discussed above. They carry the sense that South African

Indians are industrious and therefore should not rely on the state for funding, but

try as a community, as in the past, to keep Indian languages alive. The following responses are representative of this discourse:

> "It is sad how the South African Indian communities have lost parts of their culture and customs. It is strange that Indians view the possible removal of Indian language from schools as a death knell for Indian languages. Such a pity for a community with a rich history of overcoming apartheid and establishing its own schools, colleges and temples when the government provided nothing for them. It is a pity that people are relying on schools to keep Indian languages alive. When there were no facilities provided, our forefathers established themselves. Because the state does not support the promotion of Indian languages, it does not mean we should stop learning them. Sure, under democratic government, we deserve equal opportunity, but we should not reliant on that for our culture and language." (Ashley Naidoo, 35, Phoenix, *Post* 11-14 November 1998)

> "Although I do not agree with the Department of Education removing Indian languages from the school curriculum, I think that we have only ourselves to blame. My own experience of trying to learn the Tamil language was an eye-opener. After much canvassing, we could only get an enrolment of about 15 people from Verulam to attend. This is a clear indication in learning and preserving our culture, yet we scream out loud when there is a move to remove these languages from the school syllabus. Indian people need to take a keener and committed interest in preserving our language." (Mr. Laven Moodley, 31, Verulam, *Post*, 11-14 November 1998)

> "... I feel strongly about retaining the teaching of Indian languages at schools. Even through we might be a minority group, I feel it is our basic right to preserve our culture. I understand that "cutbacks" are a reality during this economically difficult period. This is when we need to adopt a pro-active, rather than a reactive stance, and get our business sector to support this essential service and pump money where it is needed. We did it before when our forefathers built schools. Let us not lie down now and accept what is going on." (Mr Tony Subramoney, 38, a social worker of Pinetown, *Post*, 11-14 November 1998)

Clearly some South African Indians recognise that it is difficult to drum up support for Indian languages and the overriding theme in this discourse is that if Indian languages are to survive, it is the Indian community's responsibility not governments. For individuals expressing this particular view, the "culling" of Indian languages is not viewed as marginalisation at all. Further to this debate, Mr I C Meer, who is now deceased, argued that the best way to save Indian

languages was to begin at home, here again urging Indians themselves to take responsibility for the decline of Indian languages.

Box 7:
"Ways to save Indian languages: Start on the Home Front"
by IC Meer, deceased,
who was a member of the KZN Parliament and president of the
Democratic Education Advancement League.
(*Post*, 18-21 November 1998)

The decline in learner demand for Indian languages at the University of Durban Westville, the only tertiary institution in SA, where these languages are taught, poses serious problems amongst the one million Indian South Africans who constitute the largest Indian population outside India.

Five generations ago after the first Indians arrived in KZN, on board the SS Truro in 1860; UDW has disclosed that in 1998 no student enrolled for most of the language courses on offer-Tamil, Telegu, Hindi, Gujurati and Urdu.

Similarly, there were few or no enrolments for Arabic and Sanskrit. The total number of students enrolled for Indian languages and Arabic had dropped to only 38, with nine lecturers, resulting in an annual loss to UDW of R1 million from 1996. The university has therefore decided to restructure its language and religious programmes, without dismissing any members of staff.

In 1998, with our democratic constitution guaranteeing equity in religion and language, we must look at the language question in a holistic manner without becoming emotional over ethnicity.

We must take into account what are viable, sharing responsibilities among all tertiary educational institutions in our province.

The Constitution provides for a Pan African Language Board and a commission to promote advance and inculcate respect for all the country's languages and religions. But as it has been said, in the final analysis God and the Government can only help those who help themselves.

UDW, under its vice-chancellor, Professor Pule Ramashala, has declared courses in Tamil, Telegu, Hindi, Gujurati and Urdu as well as Arabic and Sanskrit, unavailable.

The unavailability of these courses arises from what is happening in our schools and in our homes. Any remedial measures, which do not take into account the flaws in the home and at provincial schools, will fail to address the

When these students reach UDW, they abandon the learning of Indian languages and Arabic.

It is a fact that Indian languages are spoken less and less in the home. The community no longer has Indian language publications like the weekly newspapers Indian Options and Indian Views, which were published in English and Gujurati for many decades. No longer are meetings called through leaflets, in, for example, Tamil, the language which was the most widely spoken and read at the Magazine Barracks in Durban. Nor are there public announcements in Indian languages at railway stations. Even in the courts of law, there is no longer a demand for Indian interpreters. All this points to the serious decline in the use of Indian languages.

The first and second generations of Indians in SA, and even some of the third generation, spoke only the Indian language fluently. Now only English is spoken fluently and the language of choice often happens to be Zulu.

The first Indian language to come to SA was Bengali, which arrived in the Cape in the 17th century.

This was consistent with the death of the languages of slaves the world over. The same happened to the African languages of the slaves in the United States.

We must ensure that the five Indian languages mentioned in our Constitution do not meet the same fate as the Bengali languages did in South Africa.

We must stop the present emotional and parochial approach to the language issue. This issue must be removed from the party political sphere, especially as the 1999 elections are on our minds. While we cannot forget the raw deal that all the languages received under apartheid, we must now see the past in its true perspective. Let us have a good look at the present positioning in Indian homes, in the community, in our publications and in Indian literature and we will discover our own faults, which cannot be glossed over.

To save the Indian languages from decline and possible death, it is suggested that the community fully investigate the real causes of the present state of affairs and takes remedial measures without finding scapegoats.

Perhaps the most important work will have to be done on the home front, supported by the many organisations, which have been at work for generations promoting these five languages.

The Indian community must carry out these tasks as part of the important task of dealing with the position of all

situation and the decline in Indian languages, will continue unabated. It is said that in our schools, Indian languages are offered without any examinations and that in many cases are imposed by parents on unwilling learners.	languages of SA, and more particularly with the languages of those disadvantages under apartheid. We must have not a narrow outlook, but a holistic one. We want all our languages to flourish in South Africa, which must become a garden with flowers of many linguistic hues."

Placing the blame with the government is, however, a common strategy. At the Pan African Language Board workshop held in Gauteng in 1999, Telegu scholar Megavarrna Balrajh Reddy argued that government has consistently failed in its responsibilities towards the Indian community. The following is a condensed version of his presentation:

> "From 1860 to the present, a glaring fact has been the neglect by the different government departments in providing for the maintenance and meaningful development of Indian languages in our country. It must be stressed that Indians did not emigrate voluntarily from India, but were in the main influenced by false promises into coming to this country so that local industries (especially cane farming) could benefit. Needless to say the development of such industries led to the country's economic growth.
>
> Since the then-government of Natal had helped to facilitate the importation of Indian labour, it was and is the responsibility of the government (KZN or SA) to see to the needs of its people, be they indigenous or imported. The state has failed to carry out this responsibility and as Indians we once more appeal to the democratic ideals of the South African government and the state's oft declared steadfast upholding of the principles of the basic human rights by arguing that Indians who were brought to this country through state facilitation should be accorded their rights through the state's responsibility for the maintenance and development of Indian languages." (*Post*, 3 October 1999)

ELAC too has argued that historically, during the indenture period, the state made no provision for Indian children to study their own language and cultures. The Cape Town Agreement of 1927, which allowed Indian children admission to white schools, made tempting offers such as offering Union citizenship to Indians who followed Western lifestyles. After World War 2 during the apartheid era, many laws enforcing racial segregation and political discrimination were enacted in South Africa. As a result, the government of India openly opposed the policies of the South African government by imposing political, cultural and economic

sanctions in 1948 which also had an effect: sections had an impact in the religo-cultural realm because cultural goods could not be brought into this country.

5.5.3 The Current Situation

Currently the South African government has labeled Indian languages as "foreign" and South African Indians have made representations in the media that are multi-layered. Despite the efforts to preserve Indian languages there is a lack of interest amongst sections of the South African Indian community. It was noted earlier that the University of Durban-Westville was recently forced to shut down its Indian language section, among others, because poor response made those departments unviable.[54] It is also recognized amongst sectors of the Indian community, that the need for Indian languages is not as important as other basic issues such as poverty in the community.

Overall, however, ELAC and many other cultural leaders see this as the marginalization of Indian languages and view it as symptomatic of the marginalization of South African Indians. In interview, Mr Ram Maharaj said:

> **Mr Ram Maharaj**: "No government can dim our culture because our languages have a spiritual basis. But if our languages are allowed to die, so will our communities. To ensure their survival, we need to stand together and fight for language preservation ... It is primarily through language that traditions are transmitted from one generation to another. If a language in a community is not understood it may be taught only through the medium of another language, which means very little to the learner. We plead that every child be given the opportunity to learn his language ..." (Interview with Mr Ram Maharaj, 30 October 2000)

Mr Ram Maharaj appeals to the spiritual essence of Indian-ness, stating defiantly that government attempts to destroy Indian languages will not succeed since the languages have a spiritual basis. But language he feels is the core means through which traditions are passed from one generation to another, despite the fact that the majority of South African Indians are not conversant.

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[54] It is interesting to note that UD-W is not alone in this regard. Surprisingly universities and colleges in India are also experiencing similar problems. With the admission process underway at Delhi University, academics have once again expressed concern are the declining interest in undergraduate courses in Indian languages (Singh, 1998). The lack of interest in Indian languages appears to be a global phenomenon.

This is a common plea, as for example in the following letter to the editor of *The Sunday Tribune*:

| Box 8: |
| "**Language should not be an issue in a multi-ethnic SA**" |
| Letter to the Editor, 2-5 December, *The Sunday Tribune*, 1999) |

Across the billowy seas came our forefathers (the Indians) to make their entry into SA. From whatever part of India they came, whatever language they spoke, whichever caste or creed they belonged to, Indians who migrated to countries like SA, Singapore, Malaysia and elsewhere had a common cultural heritage and their thoughts and attitudes were alike. It's these thoughts and attitudes that have linked it together here and elsewhere. In a multi-ethnic country, like SA there are ways and means to preserve our culture and language, such as Tamil. In examining this context, the questions that arise in one's mind are: Why promote Tamil? Is there a need for it? What are the objectives

Of promoting Tamil? Perhaps in the land of Tamil where everyone speaks the language - Tamil is in print all over and used in all media - there's no need for a specific effort to promote the language. *But the situation here is different in that we live in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society. It's therefore important to maintain our mother tongue. Language does not exist in isolation. It's inextricably linked with culture and tradition.* Tamil, with a history of more than a thousand years has nurtured a rich cultural heritage that's clearly reflected in its writings. In a migrant community and an Indian community, whether SA, Singapore or Malaysia, it's not uncommon to find gradual erosion in the use of one's mother tongue in adherence of traditional practices, and ethical and social values. Alderman LS Moodley, PMB.

The state on the other hand, regards the cuts as an attempt to rationalize resources. Their appeal is made in "economic" terms as indicated in earlier extracts. In response Mr Ram Maharaj said:

> "... We plan to mobilise the broader Indian community against what the organisation considered the 'marginalisation of our minority group.' Minister Asmal will certainly contribute to the destruction of Indian culture if he destroys Indian languages. This Eurocentric and colonial style move is unacceptable. His decision is ill-informed and ill considered ..." (*Post*, 18-20 June 2003)

To Mr Ram Maharaj, now the Chairman of the ELAC, the decision to phase out Indian languages was as a result of the "marginalization of a minority group". The decision was seen within the broader state of "marginalization" of the Indian community (elaborated on in Chapter Six). In addition he terms this decision a "Eurocentric" one and links it to colonial and apartheid discrimination against Indians in South Africa.

In the ongoing debate around the reinstating of Indian languages, the National Department of Education recently submitted an interesting response to allegations such as these (see Box 9 below). Dr Cassius Lubisi, Special Advisor to the Minister of Education, finds it necessary to defend the Department against allegations that Muslims were give fairer treatment since Urdu will continue to be taught. (The fragmentation implicit in identifications with India, discussed in Chapter Six, is evident here). Dr Lubisi states that Urdu is only kept on since there are substantial enrolment rates in the subject.

Box 9:

Letter to the Editor by R. Cassius Lubisi, PhD, Special Advisor to the Minister of Education (*Sunday Times KZN*, 27 July 2003).

"ANC give preference to languages of colonisers" (*Sunday Times Extra*, July 6) refer.

K. Pillay accuses the ANC government of being in cahoots with colonisers. Specific venom is reserved for so-called Arab colonisers, who are equated with the Muslim section of our population. The writer launches a sectarian attack on Muslims, whom he or she accuses of having come to South Africa as "free traders to make money as traders".

The only reason Muslims find themselves as targets of such a public expression of hatred by Pillay is that Arabic is one of six foreign languages that have been proposed to continue to be offered in the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12. Pillay then adopts the dangerous tactic of playing Muslims against Hindus.

Let me assure Pillay that the government does not and will not formulate policy on a narrow sectarian basis as he or she alleges. The history of struggle counts Muslims, Jews, Christians, agnostics and others among its heroes and heroines. The struggle against apartheid was a struggle against the kind of narrow sectarianism favoured by the likes of Pillay. There has been a lot of fiction told by some individuals and interest groups about the position of Eastern Languages in the curriculum. Some, like IFP Member of Parliament Kamal Panday ... are taking cheap shots at the government in an attempt to revive their dwindling fortunes ahead of the general election in 2004.

Firstly, there is no attempt by the Minister of Education or anyone for that matter, to "cull" Eastern languages and deny speakers of these languages their constitutional right to develop and promote the languages and their associated cultures. Indeed, the minister is on record as having said on several occasions that non-official languages spoken

the requirements of the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades 1-9 and the Language in Education Policy.

Thirdly, all languages listed in the interim syllabus for grades 10 to 12, including Eastern Languages, will continue to be offered until the introduction of the new National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 from 2006.

Because of the disproportionate cost of offering subjects with very low enrolment rates, as is the case with many of the Eastern languages in grades 10 to 12, the minister invited concerned communities and embassies to make representation to him to discuss the status of foreign languages in the new curriculum for grades 10 to 12 in November 2002.

Some embassies and language communities responded to the minister's call. They all acknowledged that it is not possible for the Department of Education to offer all foreign languages when the new curriculum for grades 10 to 12 is introduced in 2006. Some embassies committed themselves to funding the development and offering of particular foreign languages. For the first time, these embassies committed themselves to funding the teaching of these foreign languages not only in historically disadvantaged schools but also in selected township and rural villages.

Fourthly, the status of Hindi, Tamil and Urdu, Gujurati and Telegu is still the subject of discussion between the Ministry of Education and concerned community organisations. Ways and means of supporting and promoting the offering of these languages in grades 10 to 12 are being explored, including regarding the possibility of approaching foreign governments and donors.

In order for this to succeed, the Ministry of Education requires the cooperation of the various concerned communities, not the vitriolic attacks of

by various communities in South Africa should be promoted in line Section 6 of our Constitution. Secondly, all languages listed in the curriculum will continue to be offered in grades 1 to 9 in line with	the chattering of classes represented by the likes of Pillay and Panday. Dr Lubisi, has clarified the ministry's position regarding the Eastern languages in the school curriculum. This correspondence is now closed- Editor)

The recent development is that the NCEL (former ELAC) has formed a "united front", comprising of Hindu, Muslim and Christian organizations, to ensure that Indian languages can continue to be taught at schools in KwaZulu-Natal and be re-introduced in Gauteng and other provinces. The Chairman of the NCEL, Mr Ram Maharaj stated, "This is the first time that three different linguistic groups have come together and underlines the need to combine our voices in the call to preserve our cultural heritage..." (*Post*, 9-11 July 2003).

This section has explored some of the ways in which attempts to place Indian languages on the state agenda challenged the hegemonic view that Indian languages are "foreign" to South Africa. Various discursive strategies were utilised in contesting the issue of Indian languages. The predominating discourses were that it was an essential part of Indian culture. Further the marginalization of Indian languages was seen as symptomatic of the general marginalization of South African Indians in South African society. One also finds that particular representations of Indian-ness were made in the public sphere for particular purposes. In addition religious groups that were generally conflictual combined for mutual gain. Therefore the cultural struggle over Indian languages was "strategically essentialist".

5.6   Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that cloaked in essentialist garb, a segment of the South African Indian community has set about recreating a community derived from an eternal cultural essence. Through this essence, South African Indians seek to "eternalise" their existence as a result of the perceived threats in the New

South Africa. These terms of cultural preservation and negotiation are in part driven by the changes brought about by globalization (the perceived threat of Westernisation and the moral degeneration of society), and in part by the new conditions in South Africa. The need for a "defensive community" is expressed in creating an idealised and ultimately reified Indian-ness.

The chapter explored the contemporary search for an authentic Indian-ness – in itself a hotly debated concept in Durban. It also identified particular themes that are common in the articulation of essentialist discourses. This search for an "authentic" Indian identity highlights the nature of the community. Vickram Chandra colourfully describes diasporic Indian communities as "… these Resident Non-Indians, who, beset by a consciousness of their own isolation from 'Real India', feel an overpowering nostalgia for an Indian-ness that never was, for a mythical paradisiacal lost garden of cultural and spiritual unity" (Vickram Chandra, www.bostonreview.mit.edu, 23 April 2003). His description seems apposite in this case. In South Africa, the search for an authentic Indian-ness is driven by the fear of hybridity or contamination by Westernisation as well as Africanisation: "From their fear of the mongrel nature of their own selves, from their fear of the new Indian tongues spoken by their mongrel children, grows the golem-demon of the All-devouring West." (Vickram Chandra, www.bostonreview.mit.edu).

Mike Featherstone (1997:47) notes that pockets of localism are not unusual in complex postcolonial societies:

> "It can be argued that the difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity, and the doubts and anxieties they often engender, are reasons why 'localism', or the desire to return home, becomes an important theme – regardless of whether home is real or imaginary, temporary, syncretized, or simulated, or whether it is manifest in a fascination with the sense of belonging, affiliation, and community attributed to the home of others."

Here, this search for Indian-ness is also in part symptomatic of a feeling of isolation from mainstream South African society. Raman (2003) has suggested

that there are particular moments in South African society where South African Indians have displayed greater diasporic consciousness than at other times. The current moment appears to be one of these.

It is in this context that we need to be cautious in interpreting these moments of fictional imagining of essentialist cultural identities. Homi Bhabha (1994:2) reminds us that:

> "Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in the moments of cultural transformation."

This chapter has explored the "articulation of difference" that is essentialist and fundamentalist. Chapter Seven discusses the counter-essentialist discourses that articulate a different identity. However the construction Indian-ness does not only cohere around constructions of essences but also in imagined local and global geographical links in an attempt to create and mobilise particular "symbolic communities".

Chapter Six

Expressions of Indian-ness: Local and Global Identifications in Post-Apartheid South Africa

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter and the following one is to explore the range of ways in which South African Indians are currently locating themselves (both locally and globally) in order to negotiate their "place" in the New South Africa. The interview responses and the media analysis suggest that South African Indians are located at different positions along a continuum, one pole clinging to an essentialist, primordial Indian identity, the other abandoning their "Indian-ness" altogether, often to embrace an African identity. This chapter focuses on the left and centre of the continuum where Indian-ness is asserted in various forms. Counter-essentialist discourses are the focus of Chapter Seven. The continuum is represented schematically below:

| Essentialist | South African | Counter-Essentialist |
| (Indian) | | (African etc) |
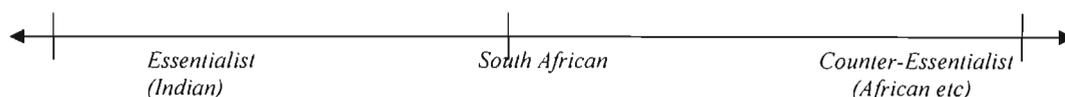
These identity constructions of South African Indians to a large degree oscillate between the two diametrical opposing theoretical positions of *tradition* and *translation* as discussed in Chapter Two. As the previous chapter made explicit

the essentialist or 'tradition-infused" identities, this chapter looks at how these identities draw on particular geographical locations for their spiritual succor. These global and local identifications are expressions of Indian-ness in post-apartheid South Africa that transgress the boundaries of the nation state.

Implicit in these constructions of Indian-ness is also a tension between what sociologists call *assignation* and *assertion*, which together shape cultural/ethnic identities, particularly in diasporic communities. Asserted identity includes the identity categories that immigrants bring with them and assert in the host society. Assignation, suggests sociologists, refers to the identities that immigrants are assigned in the host society. During apartheid South African Indians were assigned an identity: they were seen as broadly as Indian, despite the differences in the community along caste, religious and linguistic lines. This analysis suggests that contemporary South African Indians find themselves negotiating their identity formations between these two bipolar positions, an "assigned" and an "asserted" identity.

As already noted in the previous chapter, the analysis of this community suggests that there have been moments in South African history during which South African Indians have displayed a greater transnational sense, demonstrated through a stronger than normal identification with India (Raman, 2003). It is suggested in this thesis that one such moment is occurring currently and that this identification with an imagined homeland is taking new (and apparently less than progressive) forms. In the 1940s and during apartheid, identification with India was a part of an international left wing discourse of national liberation coupled with the fight for democratic rights in South Africa; whereas contemporary South African Indian diasporic imaginings tend to be associated with the right wing politics of the BJP and Sri Lankan politics.

The end of apartheid and the geography of economic globalization have meant that the South African Indian community has created a network of businesses within the Indian Diaspora. Through stronger economic ties, the South African

Indian community displays stronger ties to India and this heightened sense of diasporic consciousness has also demonstrated itself in the cultural and religious sphere. For example, some Hindi-speaking and Tamil-speaking South African Indians are displaying a greater allegiance to their respective linguistic global groupings and geographical identifications with "north" and "south" India – identifications which are technically irrelevant to South Africa – are being made.

The tension between asserted and assigned identities is played out in terms of two distinct approaches to the assertion of "Indian-ness" in contemporary South Africa. One of these sub-discourses – closely associated with the "assigned" identity of the apartheid period – articulates a broad Indian identity that is emphasized for example during national and provincial government elections, or in fighting for inclusion in affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment policies. This discourse suggests that Indians are a cohesive unit, a homogenous block. Such identification echoes the racial categorization of the apartheid era, where each racial group was ethnically labeled. In terms of "asserted" identity, South African Indians are increasingly representing themselves as Indian in the context of the global Indian diaspora.

In both cases, political advantage can be gained from the presentation of a homogenous identity. It is clear that Indians in South Africa, by creating essentialist constructions of Indian-ness, employ strategic essentialism, a term coined by Gayatri Spivak. Spivak suggesting that essentialist notions of communities or ethnic groups are deployed for strategic gain, whether it is for a community to be recognized or even protected. It is very broadly within these two discursive terrains, that South African Indians define themselves as Indian.

It should be noted, however, that at the same time, due to the assertion of regional and sectoral Indian identities, there is simultaneously a fragmentation along religious and linguistic lines amongst South African Indians. A heightened sense of religious or linguistic identity, manifesting in a Tamil, Hindi, Christian or

Muslim identity, coexists with the homogenous assertion of Indian-ness discussed above.

Literature on diaspora suggests that the extent to which diasporic Indians assume their different identities depends largely on the delicate balance between them as a group and the social and political climate in their host societies. In the new South Africa, Indians as a minority group feel marginalized. They express their constructions of isolation and marginalisation in different ways, but especially as a heightened diasporic consciousness related to India the imagined homeland. Commentators argue that the resurgence in Indian-ness or the reassertion of a cohesive and homogenous Indian identity is occurring as a result of the policies of Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment policies.

It must also be noted that this phenomenon is not limited to Indians in South Africa. Globally Indians within the diaspora are claiming their allegiance to India. To cite one incident, a mosque was demolished on a religious Hindu site and Indians throughout the world declared support in financial and emotional kind to either the Muslims or the Hindus. It was said that the greatest support for the cause came from Indians living elsewhere in the world rather than from Indians in India (Kalra and Hutnyk, 1998).

The discourses discussed in this chapter that reveal identifications with particular (local and global) constructions of Indian-ness are summarized in the following diagram:

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         ┌────────────────────────┐           │
│         │     Indian-ness        │           │
│         │     Discourses of      │           │
│         │  "Marginalisation""    │           │
│         │                        │           │
│         │     Discourses of      │           │
│         │    "Vulnerability      │           │
│         └────────────────────────┘           │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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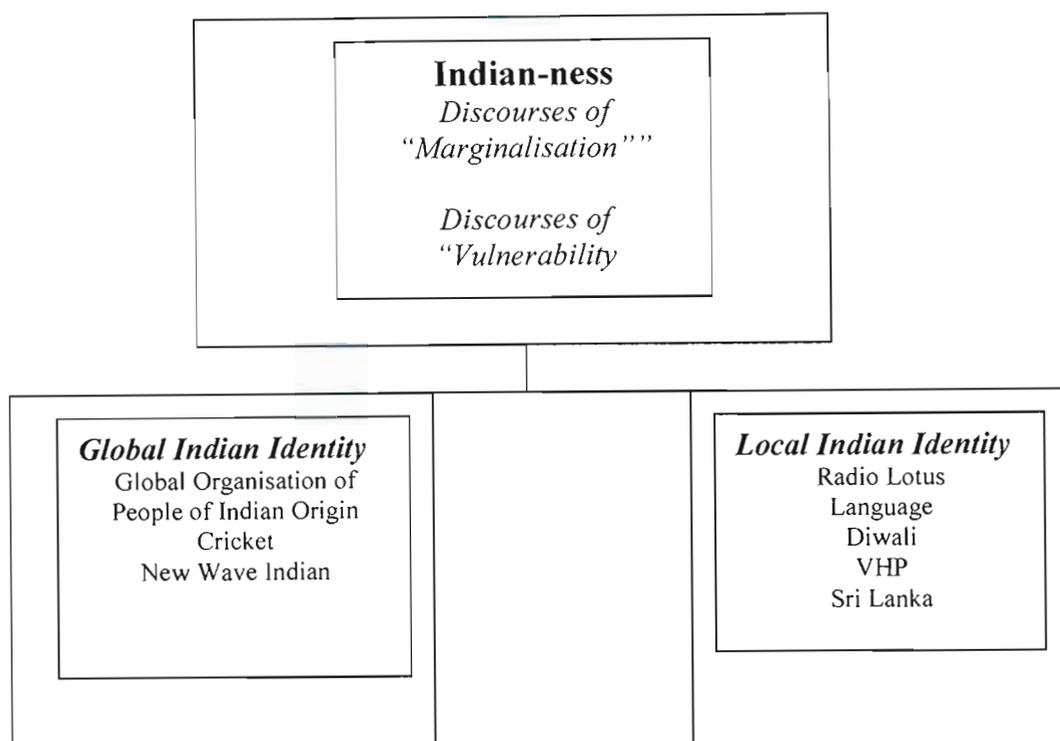
Figure 3:

General Discourses of Indian-ness

Figure 3 illustrates the various discourses that have been identified in the analysis and the chapter is organized around explaining each discourse.

The assertion of a homogenous "Indian-ness" and a defensive identification with being "Indian" is in part a reaction to a perceived local context of threat. The interview respondents and participants in the media debates struggle with the identify of "Indian" that they were assigned under apartheid; yet as described in Chapter Five, they also assert it in order to differentiate themselves from other groups as well as to try to gain status as a minority group. These responses or local expressions of Indian-ness are grouped under the headings "discourses of marginalization" and "discourses of vulnerability". Discursive constructions are expressed in response to particular issues and two of these issues are considered in the section on discourses of marginalisation: affirmative action, and the debate about whether or not South African Indians can be part of the African

Renaissance. In addition, the defensive constructions of Amichand Rajbansi's "Minority Front" party are considered. This party clearly makes use of discourses of marginalisation to try to create a cultural and political constituency.

6.2 Discourses of Marginalisation

6.2.1 Affirmative Action

> "If you's white, you's alright
> If you's brown, stick aroun'
> If you's black, get back, get back" (Anon)

Affirmative action is a policy that seeks to create a framework to redress the imbalances of the apartheid past, through giving preference to Black prospective employees. "Black" in the legislation includes Coloured, Indian and African. However many companies do not exercise affirmative action in this way and in many cases, Black suggests African to them. The above poem captures the sentiments of Indian South Africans during apartheid. However, they continue to "stick aroun'" in post-apartheid South Africa; their socio-economic position stays poised between black and white. The following section explores the concerns that South African Indians express in the public sphere, concerning affirmative action and black economic empowerment policies. These issues are, of course, deeply tied to racial identifications and identities, both asserted and assigned.

The affirmative action policies and black economic empowerment policies of the ANC government have been crucial themes around which South African Indians negotiate their sense of identity. Marginalisation in the public sphere is a common thread in much of the material collected. The following are just two examples from the media during the period under review:

Box 10:

The Tribune Herald says, "First not white enough - now not black enough
(Tribune Herald, 22 July 2001)

It's an old story and it still hurts. During apartheid people of Indian descent were discriminated against because they were not white. They were shunted out of their homes because they were declared to be living in (often more desirable) "white areas" and Indians were not allowed to live side by side with whites. Many people were bankrupted when they lost their businesses under the infamous Group Areas Act. Now there is a new form of discrimination. You will not find it in the law books, but it is just as hurtful. Instead of being categorized as being too black to associate with whites, Indians often find themselves not being black enough to get a job. Young people who apply for work are being sidelined by many employers who are falling over themselves to curry favour who want to be

seen as politically correct by employing Africans, some with dubious qualifications, rather than often highly qualified, thoroughly deserving Indian applicants. Such employers are doing nobody a favour. They are destroying the ambition of young people who want to make a valuable contribution to the economy, boost business and commerce, be successful and contribute constructively to the society in which we all live. Instead, they become disaffected. Many take their skills and their talents elsewhere. The employers hurt themselves, too. Often they compromise their own standards and their profits suffer. By all means help the disadvantaged people in every reasonable way. But don't discriminate against deserving youngsters - and others - in the process. That is no way to build a prosperous, happy nation.

Box 11:

'Indians are second class citizens" , by Narain Sewchunder
(Letter to the Editor)
(The Leader, 20 June 2000)

Sir, We, the fourth and fifth generation South Africans whose ancestors hailed from the East, is still labelled African Indians or Indo-South Africans. It's due to these labels that we feel alienated in the country of our birth. If the editorial of the *Ilanga* newspaper reflects the thinking of the majority then we do have ever the right to feel alienated, to expect that our participation in the building of a rainbow nation will be an effort.

Our constant marginalisation in commerce, industry, local government particularly the Durban Metro North and South Councils as well as provincial and local government is a sign that we are not regarded as fully-fledged citizens.

It would appear as if the majority of the institutions do understand that the affirmative action programme does not mean employment of Blacks. The affirmation action is a policy which constitutes an equitable proportioning of opportunities; however this can only be attained if it is implemented in the correct manner. The inaccurate and ineffective applications of affirmative action programme are at the root of the problem.

Example: The medical college at the University

caused by the inaccurate application of the affirmative action programme. Last year a student of Indian descent who's attained distinctions has to take a court interdict to seek admission into medical college. He was refused due to the affirmative action policy of approximately 20 student places that were allocated to Indians.

This year a similar case arose when a student with five A's and one B was refused admission ... The deputy president defends affirmative action. He however has not done anything and President Mandela is equally guilty of not outlining exactly what the affirmative action policy is and how it is to be implemented in the various sectors of commerce, industry, government and most-importantly tertiary education ... A start to his investigation should be the reason why the residents of Southern Durban area has life-giving commodities (e.g. Water) revoked when they refuse to pay, while residents of predominately Black areas, have no interruption to services when they are unable to pay. The disconnection of these life-giving commodities often leads to dire consequences for the residents of this community. If this status quo continues why we should vote and more importantly why should we support the present government in their votes to be re-elected.

of Natal is a prime example of the difficulties	

The letter to the Editor (See Box 11) and Mr Sewchunder's letter to the editor illustrates the marginalisation of South African Indians, in broader South African society. Both highlight the sense of temporariness that South African Indians express that is shown to be a continual historical phenomenon. Specifically Me Sewchunder discusses the issue of admission to the medical college at the University of Natal. The University's admission policy has become a site of enormous cultural struggle. Many Indian students who excelled were refused admission into the University because of the new racial quota system.[55]

The following captions to newspaper articles capture the tensions around affirmative action and the response by the South African Indian community:

- "Indian fears misplaced, says Mandela" *Daily News*, 28 October 1998

- "Indians are part of a majority, says Mandela" *Sunday Tribune*, 1 November 1998

- "You are as South African as S'bu and I, Thabo tells Indian voters", *Tribune Herald*, 14 March 1999

- "Join the majority, Mandela urges Indians" *Daily News*, 18 September 1999

- "Indian fears need sympathy" *Daily News*, 21 January 2000

In November 1998, President Nelson Mandela took part in a special interview on Durban's Radio Lotus. During the talkshow, Mandela had the following to say about the issue of affirmative action. He of course hoped to allay the fears of South African Indians:

> "Affirmative action is not intended to benefit any particular ethnic group but is intended to open opportunities and resources to all previously disadvantaged people - Africa, Coloureds and Indians, women and the disabled of all groups. I can only point to what is happening around me.

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[55] The example he uses is that of my brother Ashley who was refused admission, although he finished in the top ten students in KwaZulu-Natal. The issue of "affirmative action" thus came closer to home.

There is no discrimination. My political advisor is a well-known Indian, Ahmed Kathrada, my communication officer is Priscilla Naidoo while the person in charge of all my official residences is Ella Govender from Durban ... This is quite apart from the fact they are represented by five cabinet ministers. That the Speaker of the national assembly, Frene Ginwala, is an Indian and the chief justice of this country is Ismail Mohammed, where does the perception come from that there is discrimination against Indians?

There was a great deal of dislocation when we went into government. We lost the links which we used to have with all communities because most experienced leaders went to government and left people who are not so experienced and in many cases who don't know the history of the movement. There is no doubt people will change their minds about affirmative action once they understand it. If today you have Afrikaners co-operating and delivering services, sharing their resources with the previously disadvantaged, there is no reason why the Indian community should not in due course be convinced if we improve our lines of communication at grassroots level.

There is a possibility big business misinterpreted affirmative action. The question is how do we explain it? Right from the beginning, in the run up to the elections and in all the forums which I addressed around the country, I made the point that affirmative action means that government institutions must be fully representative of all the population groups in this country and provide resources for people who have none.

We are having this complaint from Indians, coloureds, from whites and from Africans, who say we are concentrating on the Xhosas, not on the Basotho, not the Zulus. They say the ANC is a Xhosa organisation, you have that coming from all ethnic groups. Whenever you have a fundamental transformation of society, such as we have, the minorities always have their fears and concerns; it is therefore the duty of the government to address this. But the transformation bringing about a new dispensation has created this genuine concern.

I am here to say to the Indian community, move away from the sidelines, come to the centre, be part of the majority, don't think you are a minority. All the demands which were made by Gandhi for the Indian community have been addressed, and therefore there is no reason why the Indian community should feel concerned because we have introduced a non-racial dispensation which doesn't discriminate against any particular individual." (Nelson Mandela, Radio Lotus Talkshow, 1 November 1998)

However affirmative action has remained an issue and has contributed to the expression of a defensive identity. The constructions of marginality developed as a result of affirmative action and black economic empowerment, have acted to congeal an increasingly homogenous Indian identity, especially as represented in the public sphere.

Dr Adam Habib, a political theorist, explains the context within which this is occurring. He argues that the simultaneous application of affirmative action and neo-liberal economic policies has resulted in the poorest of the poor in the Coloured and Indian communities being negatively affected. This is ironic as the ANC is supposed to be the poor people's party, yet the poor amongst the Coloured and Indian community tend not to vote for them. It is in this way (through the political process) that the Indian community, like the Coloured community, have expressed their discontent on issues of affirmative action and black economic empowerment policies. Dr Adam Habib states:

> **Dr Adam Habib**: "Now I want to be very clear, I think that an affirmative action policy is very very important. I think that you can't address the historical disparities of the past, the racial disparities, without some affirmative action. The problem is what kind of affirmative action you actually implement and the context in which you implement it, and now what they are doing, the ANC, is coupling an affirmative action programme simultaneously with a neo-liberal economic strategy. So what you are doing is that you are reducing the economic pie while simultaneously implementing an affirmative action policy. And what that does is that you are making the cake small and you are trying to expand the number of people that use it and so what is created is a friction among people within who have access to that cake.
>
> So who has the affirmative action programme really affected? The affirmative action programme in the South African context affects the poorest within the Indian, Coloured and the communities and it has done that because these are the most easily replaced in the South African context. So for instance if you are an unskilled worker, it's far more easy to replace you with another unskilled worker than someone who has professional skills like a PhD or a doctor, and so what you beginning to see is *differential political responses to the transition by different classes* in the Indian, Coloured and White communities.

Because the poorest of the Indian community and the poorest of the Coloured community ... are actually voting for parties on the right of the ANC because these parties have come up against the Affirmative action ... [they] blame their decrease in access to livelihood as a result of affirmative action. Whereas you look at the more privileged layers within the Indian community, they are actually responding very differently to the transition. If you look at the election results of 1999 you will see that the areas in Indian and Coloured areas that where the income per family was less than R2 500, people voting for DP and NNP. And in areas where the income was above R2 500 per family, that the ANC was increasingly getting the vote.

And that poses an interesting transect and it also poses a moral dynamic contradiction for the ANC because the ANC purports to represent the interest of the poor, yet the poor within the Indian, Coloured are actually voting for another party and it is the rich within the Indian and Coloured communities are voting for the ANC. And so the big question is why this happening is, and the argument is that it is as a result of the simultaneous application of the affirmative action with neo-liberal economic policies." (Interview with Dr Adam Habib, 9 November 2000)

The main point of Dr Habib's argument is that there has been "*differential political responses to the transition by different classes* in the Indian, Coloured and White communities". His arguments challenge the stereotype that Indians are a homogenous group, since he explains the difference in political behaviour to the various classes in the community.

Dr Ashwin Desai articulated a similar response on the effects of affirmative action and the GEAR strategies on South African Indians. He was asked to articulate the main changes since the end of apartheid and explain how these impacted on Durban's Indian community.

Dr Ashwin Desai: "... economically I would argue that the Indian community, the Indian working class, the low middle class have suffered particularly and peculiarly in the transition precisely because the niche labour markets where they found jobs have started to evaporate, textile, clothing, leather, service industries, they have lost a purchase in those and those are linked to globalisation and the fact that shoes etc are being made in this country at lower prices and they are now unemployed and they will never work again. They are caught in a double bind, which having lost

because of globalisation and in the transition and because they are not Black enough now and therefore they are f*ed ...

That's the one part, economically there's been deprivation. Politically they are lost because they cannot find a home in an organisation like the ANC, but there's been evaporation in the civil society and Flat Residents Association, Ratepayers Associations and even football and other social activities that have started, because of a sense that there's no future...

And third the break up of the family in a very big way, the break up of the extended family, the break up of the extended family in a very big way and a class polarisation not only just between classes but families, families are polarised precisely because of these class differences, has hurt the Indian particularly and peculiarly.

Fourthly obviously because of the way that the Group Areas Act operated, that for those that make a bit of money escape must be - first course of escape to La Lucia and Umhlanga and Reservoir Hills, and therefore leaving behind places of deprivation, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, you know. (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000)

In addition to the economic effects of affirmative action in the context of globalization, Desai identifies a new sense of hopelessness among the poor, with associated social degeneration. With the ending of apartheid, those better off among the Indian community are leaving old Indian "group areas" and moving to more prestigious suburbs, "leaving behind places of deprivation". In this sense, the breakdown of an assigned identity is widening the gap between the "have's" and the "have-nots" in the Indian community in Durban.

In an interview with Professor Fatima Meer, a dedicated anti-apartheid activist she suggested that affirmative action will have a racial face as long as poverty has a racial face. She makes the point that Africans still suffer more than other groups from poverty:

Professor Fatima Meer: "... Affirmative action will have a racial face so long as poverty, lack of opportunities; underdevelopment is concentrated in a specific race ... so race also takes on the face of class. Race and class ... so until we are able to reach a position where we are all people - where when they say that there is 40 % unemployment in our society, we mean that in each group the unemployment rate is 40 % and not that the

> unemployment exists to something like 80 % amongst the Africans ... when we become equal in economic terms then we will become equal in terms of our inter cultural relationship." (Interview with Professor Fatima Meer, 23 November 2000)

However, Professor Meer's views are not widely reflected in the public sphere. Affirmative action continues to heighten Indians' sense of being disadvantaged and at risk in the New South Africa.

6.2.2 South African Indians in the African Renaissance?

> "I am an African" (Thabo Mbeki, 1996)

In contrast to Mandela's "Rainbow Nation" campaign, Thabo Mbeki has embarked on a cultural programme dubbed the "African Renaissance". For Mbeki, the reawakening of an African past is a necessary means of redirecting cultural policy. It is not so much an effort to celebrate a multicultural society, as it is about reclaiming the lost traditions of a past African glory. Mbeki's objectives privilege African languages and African philosophy:

> "The question has been posed repeatedly as to what we mean when we speak of an African Renaissance. As we all know the word 'renaissance' means rebirth, renewing and springing up anew. Therefore when we speak of an African Renaissance, we speak of the rebirth and renewal of our continent." (Thabo Mbeki, *Daily News*, 11 October 1999).

This appears to move the emphasis from a cultural diversity agenda to a black African agenda. The vision of the African Renaissance is not limited to within the South African borders but extends to the African continent.

Many South African Indians however display reluctance to embrace this vision of an African Renaissance since it conjures up images of Idi Amin's forced removal of Indians from Uganda.

The public domain provided the platform to deal with what it means to be African? and the signifier proved to be equally contentious as questioning Indian-

ness. According to an article in the *Daily News* (25 November 1999), top international model David Miller said being an African makes one different from other cultures. He said:

> "During my travels around the world I have fully realized what is different about Africans in general and South Africans in particular. We have a sense of community, family and friends that seems to have been lost in many countries. We have a spirit of freedom and a work ethic that I have never found in America". (*Daily News,* 25 November 1999)

Interestingly Mr Miller here defines African-ness as a "spirit of freedom and a work ethic" similarly to the discourses of Indian-ness identified in Chapter Five. Although what is not apparent here is the biological signifier of African-ness that is being African is not defined in terms of race or colour.

On the other hand associate editor of national weekly *Sunday World* Mondli Makhanya takes a more biologically determined view. He said:

> "Once you are born with crinkly hair, a flat nose and big lips you cannot undo that. It's almost like a curse. Obviously whites can become Africans, but many of those who fight to embrace African norms and values don't really make an effort – they don't speak an African language. They support Manchestor United but have no idea of Kaizer Chiefs. African identity goes as far as their passport." (*Daily News,* 25 November 1999)

Mr Makhanya defines African-ness more in terms of physical attributes, "… born with crinkly hair, a flat nose and big lips." Furthermore he defines African-ness also as the ability to speak an African language. Clearly this is problematic. Firstly as a racial group, some "Africans" are unable to speak an African language, and then does that not make them African?

These views Mr Miller and Mr Makhanya further complicate the issue of Indians' place in the African Renaissance. Both views illustrate competing discourses of African-ness.

According to Nalini Naidoo, a journalist for the *Natal Witness,*

> "Non-racialism is the key tenet of the African Renaissance. The concept African therefore should not be understood in pigmentation terms because Colenso, Gandhi, Naicker and many others regarded Africa's problems as their own. When we speak of an African Renaissance, we are referring to the renewal of the spirit...The African Renaissance therefore not a narrow, ethnic and chauvinistic concept – it is rather about the renewal of Africa and her broadly inclusive values towards the good of mankind." (*The Natal Witness*, 1 April 1999)

Ms Naidoo's conception of African-ness is also broadly touted by the government. Certainly in the "official" discourse African-ness is not determined in "pigmentational terms. However despite assurances from our president Thabo Mbeki, "You are as African as me", the policies of affirmative action, black economic empowerment and African Renaissance have led South African Indians to express discontent. In their struggle to find their "place" and a sense of belonging in the New South Africa, Indians seek new identifications, or asserting old ones. Often the discourse is one of marginalization, and this is clearly expressed in the assertions of Amichand Rajbansi and his political party, the Minority Front.

6.2.3 Case Study: Amichand Rajbansi and the Minority Front

An analysis of the "Minority Front" is included in this section as it demonstrates the nature of the representation of the Indian community in the public sphere. The Minority Front, while it may not receive all that many votes, articulates through its controversial leader Amichand Rajbansi the concerns of many in the Indian community, and again its discourse is defensive in nature.

Anand Singh (1997) refers to Amichand Rajbansi as a "cultural entrepreneur": a self-styled politician who emphasises and builds resentment about present discriminatory practices and cultural alienation from the past (for people of Indian origin). Singh (1997) argues that South African Indians are asserting their position as a minority group, through the "culturalisation of their politics". He

goes on to say that South African Indians have chosen the path of "internal amnesia" to assert their exclusivity and minority status.
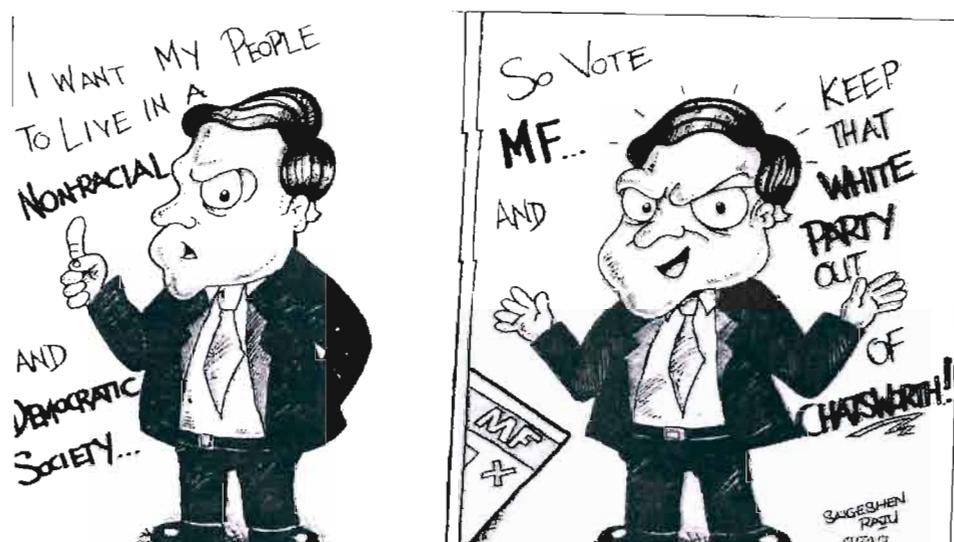
Figure 4: Mr Rajbansi and the Minority Front (*Post*, 15 April 1999)

Throughout Mr Rajbansi's political career he has singled out and used politically, issues of a historically sensitive nature to South African Indians.[56] Some of these issues will be drawn on later in the section, but briefly some of the issues he has engaged in over the years are:

- Pledging to fight for Indian fishermen who were alleging experiencing victimisation by White Natal Parks Board Officials;
- Pledging to bring Indian movie stars to Durban;
- Fighting for the rights of evicted lower-income South African Indian residents;
- Supporting the formation of Radio Hindvani, and expressing the need for a Tamil Radio station;
- Addressing South African Indians' being sidelined because of affirmative action;

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[56] See Anand Singh (1997) for a historical account of Mr Rajbansi's political career.

- Seeking the return of the death penalty because of the high rate of crime.

The above list represents just of some of the issues Mr Rajbansi has associated himself with. However the underlying theme in all of them is a sense of threat, of vulnerability, a fear of marginalisation.

INDIANS - UNITE BEHIND THE M.F. X

THE MINORITY FRONT SAYS

STOP!

- The violence and killings
- Sidelining Indians in jobs, etc
- The killing of policemen
- Discriminatory application of Affirmative Action Policy
- The destruction of our language and culture
- Actions against our school cleaners
- Loss of jobs

"All The Way!"
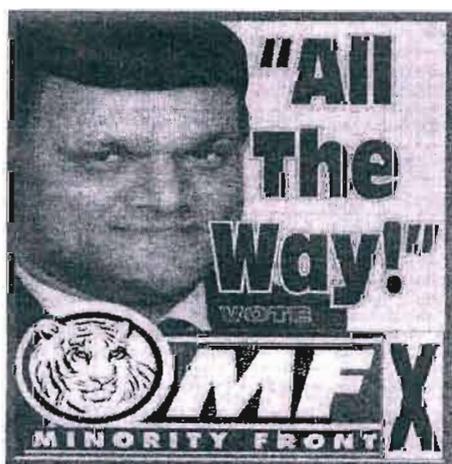
QUOTES OF MR A. RAJBANSI

- The NP and the DP competed with each other to trample the Indians in local government
- The former Council (NP and DP controlled) opposed the establishment and the extension of Phoenix because they wanted a White majority within the small Durban.
- When Whites from La Lucia did not want Indians passing their areas the Council (NP and DP controlled) made the road to the La Lucia Mall One Way.

WERE YOU BETRAYED?

- IN 1994 THE NNP won 11 in KZN with Indian votes. The insult was that they gave 9 seats to WHITES, only ONE to an Indian and only one to a BLACK.
- The DP won a senate seat for KZN and Omie Singh was next on the list. They did not reward Omie Singh, but called in a White Errol Moorcroft, from Eastern Province to represent KZN.
- In Tygerberg the NP did a deal with the ANC for a Deputy Mayor's position.

The NPP says "Stop the ANC" and bring back the death penalty. Yet they did not stop the ANC and voted for the final constitution.

The DP also said "Stop the ANC" Yet they assisted the ANC to form a Government in Northern Province.

Figure 5: Minority Front Political Campaign Message, 1999

Clearly Mr Rajbansi feels that he is protecting South African Indians' interests and ensuring them of their safety under a black-dominated group. This representation of South African Indians draws on a discourse of marginalisation

articulated in and through identification with a political party, the Minority Front. Furthermore his role as a cultural entrepreneur supports the contention that the culturalisation of politics is a feature of contemporary South African Indian life.

6.3   Discourses of Vulnerability

Newspaper articles and letters to the editor demonstrate the discourse of vulnerability that South African Indians are expressing in the public sphere. Discourses of marginalization and vulnerability are of course intertwined, but can be separated as discourses of vulnerability focus more on the sense of physical threat that Indians continue to feel in the New South Africa. The ways in which concerns about crime are verbalized says a lot about identifications, assertions of identity and associated stereotyping of "the other". The following section discusses discourses of vulnerability as expressed around issues of crime and racism. Finally a case study is presented: the response to two infamous incidents that created a deep sense of vulnerability among Indian South Africans, the *Ilanga* editorial and the Amandiya song.

6.3.1 Crime

The Radio Lotus Talkshow, in which Nelson Mandela engaged with the South African Indian community in an attempt to allay their fears, has already been mentioned. One of the concerns that he spoke about, was the issue of crime. He had the following to say about crime:

> "No doubt the high level of crime is of grave concern, to all South Africans, government and the public. But we have inherited the situation, we inherited a police force which was never trained in the task of detecting crime, but were trained to deal with political dissent." (*Sunday Tribune*, 1 November 1998)

Mr Mandela makes clear that crime is an issue amongst all South Africans and not a particular racial group. He maintains that the ANC came into power and inherited this situation; the high crime rate is not their creation, it is a problem that was inherited from the previous regime.

The reason Mr Mandela chose to address this issue directly is because this is one of the key concerns that South African Indians articulate. Deputy Mayor Mr Logie Naidoo at the Conference on "Indians in the New South Africa" tried to maintain that, while South African Indians "are worried about the crime rate", "criminals are not targeting any particular racial group."(Conference on Indians in the New South Africa, 27 April 2001). However, an analysis of the media extracts below reveals the discourse of vulnerability that South African Indians utilize to understand the crime situation.

Box 12: Does Apartheid Still Exist?
Letter to the Editor, A Dadabhay, Phoenix
Tribune Herald, 22 July 2001

It was really heartbreaking to read the article, "Man pays with life for cellphone", (Post, July 11-14) about Mr Joseph Chinnapper who was brutally murdered in a township. Are we living in a country where apartheid and hate reigns in our hearts? I find it very difficult to understand why this innocent man was murdered, unless there are reasons beside the cellphone. Is it because he wasn't black and entered a township where his skin colour differed from others? Are there areas strictly restricted to other race groups? Different race groups living separately do not exist anymore. Most people suffered during the apartheid era, but it's all over now? It's time we all put our differences behind us and live peacefully. Life is too short to go on stressing about the past. God is the one who gives life and takes it, it's not man's job.

This letter articulates the concern that many South African Indians express and is located within a discourse of vulnerability. The crucial question that he poses is of course the following: "Is it because he wasn't black and entered a township where his skin colour differed from others?" The letter writer compares this situation with apartheid, posing the rhetorical question of whether apartheid still exists, since individuals are still not free to move around. This reveals the "vulnerability" that South African Indians – *as Indians*, rather than just as citizens - feel in terms of the crime situation.

In addition a particular segment of the South African Indian population expresses their concerns that crime is indicative of other racial groups' jealousy of their achievements, as illustrated by the following letter:

Box 13: Anti-Indian Violence: A sign of jealousy
Letter to the Editor, A Naidoo
Post, **August 20-22 2003**

It happened once again. Two innocent and hard-working Indians, Sunny and Janaki Moodley of Tea Estates, Inanda, were mercilessly killed by someone hell-bent on inflicting misery and sorrow to the family. This hardworking couple, who loved mother earth, were dedicated farmers who fed our people of all races but are no more and will be missed by their immediate family and community … I want to encourage this courageous and determined family not to be intimidated and driven off their legally obtained farm and home properties through intimidation, murder, robbery, theft, violence and assaults and other scare tactics and anarchy. It is sad that the peace loving community is targeted and victimised. I have

written about this matter on many occasions and regret that the ANC-led national government and the IFP provincial government have not addressed or positively responded to alleviate the fear and uncertainty of Indians against these atrocities. If the present generations of Indians, which are participants in all tiers of government are powerless, they must speak out now. I did not believe that one day as a political activist who believed in the moral and the right fight against apartheid, that I would have to write this type of letters, because I truly and honestly believed that SA would be an exception to the rule - in that minorities throughout the world, particularly in Africa, were persecuted, disempowered and side-lined.

The textual strategy of *categorization* plays an important in this article, for if one deconstructs the text above, it is clear that the victims and the perpetrators are constructed in a positive and negative light respectively. The victim is "innocent", "hardworking", 'dedicated". This strategy is common in describing crime events; however here the victim is identified as a South African Indian and the writer extrapolates the victim's situation to be indicative of the situation of all South African Indians. Indians have legally obtained property; this is threatened by the jealousy of other groups (i.e. Africans). The discourse of "vulnerability" is evident here, in that crime is seen as a factor that exacerbates South African Indians' "minority status" and illustrates their increasingly precarious position in post-apartheid society.

Box 14: Letter to the Editor,
Vickey Moodley, Umkomaas
Post, 20-22 August 2003

Your report headed "Inanda couple killed in pre-dawn attack" in your issue of August 13-15 made very frightening and disturbing reading. Another report in your issue dated July 23-25 headed "Malakazi residents flee their homes after armed robbers shoot dead one of the locals" is also of

But is this release of prisoners not a vote-catching exercise? If this government is sincere about reducing crime, then the crime statistics should be made public. If today's crime existed before 1994 during the apartheid days, I have not doubt that the ANC would have been the first to call for the

major concern. For how long are law-abiding citizens of this country going to continue living in fear? People are being hijacked, raped or murdered daily. The killing of policemen is also continuing. Is this what the new democracy is all about? It seems quite clear that crime cannot be controlled and the ANC-led government, to add insult to injury, is very likely to release thousands of prisoners soon. The reason? The prisons are full.	resignation of the Minister of Safety and Security. We also have an IFP Provincial MEC for Safety and Security and it will be interesting to see that the provincial government is doing to bring down crime. We want real action before more people are hijacked or murdered.

The ANC-led government is clearly blamed for the crime situation in South Africa, for the lack of control. However these images are juxtaposed against South African Indians who are "law-abiding" (the identity of these "law-abiding" citizens is not stated explicitly but is implicit through the medium, i.e. the Indian newspaper *Post*). The categorisations employed in these two letters to the Editor are illustrative of the discourses of "vulnerability" commonly used by Indians to express their perceived predicament in the current South Africa. Commonly, Indians paint themselves as the "victims" of the massive crime and degeneration of society, perpetrated of course by other groups.

6.3.2 A Racist Discourse?

Stereotyped representations of other racial groups are common in the discourse. South African Indians themselves are represented in the public sphere as a homogenous grouping, reminiscent of apartheid's categorizations. Due to a segment of the South African Indian population politicizing their culture, expressing views of the transformation that are to a large extent negative, and voting for "white" parties, the accusation of racism has often been leveled at them in the post-apartheid period. Does this "laager mentality", "siege mentality", or "cocoon" mentality within broader South African society, in some ways indicate that Indians are racist? I raised this in the interviews to see how cultural mediators would respond. Mr Satish Jaggernath's response is that South African Indians are not "naturally" racist:

> **Mr Satish Jaggernath**: "... it's easy to gloss over and pretend to you that there aren't these prejudicial attitudes well-founded ... The Indian community is not naturally a racist community ... but the fact that racism exists, is because of certain factors which are being ignored, we have not

been addressing them. The leadership within the community has not provided that type of good leadership to be able to undo these things right within the context of the Indian community. Because whatever happens is that in the analysis of this community ... It's a question of saying lets take stock of the very serious situation that we have negatively, I mean the sort of negative perceptions coming out of the Indian community, what is it that we need to do to protect this community's rights as South Africans and as Indians culturally. That will be very useful." (Interview with Mr Satish Jaggernath, 18 November 2000)

However some South African Indians perceive racist attitudes (no doubt a response to a feeling of marginalisation and vulnerability) as a problem. In a letter to the editor at *Post* (10 April 2000) one reader maintained that "Indians are using 'culture' to hide their racism",

> "Ethnicity or race is not culture. Nor is curry and rice. Some Indians are using 'culture' to hide their racism and to form some kind of laager, isolated from mainstream events in South Africa ..." (*Post*, 10 April 2000).

During the Conference on "Indians in the New South Africa" held on 27 April 2001, one of the audience members had the following to say:

> **Male:** "The new South Africa, you referred to the 27th of April being a historic day, but to me the 27th of April was indeed a red letter day. On that day, [I] ... returned home from exile ... When we returned home, the conclusion that we came to as far as South African Indians are concerned is, I found that South African Indians are very conservative. I am not against religion. But I think many are also racist as a result of the apartheid system, and I think that the separate development policy of the Nationalist government did a thorough job of separating the different racial groups..." (Conference on Indians in the New South Africa, 27 April 2001)

This audience member, an exiled and returned Indian, suggests that Indians are racist because of the apartheid system that inculcated this racism.

In a Radio Lotus Talkshow, Professor Thomas Hanson, who has written extensively on the Indian diaspora (Hanson, 2002) added:

> **Professor Thomas Hanson:** 'I think it is definitely there and it is not something that is only played out by the media. I've put the question to lot of people that I talk to you know, 'Are Indians racist?' and a lot of people say quite honestly. 'Ya we are' and I think there's a lot of awareness when

you talk to people why that has come about, and people do talk about the ways they treat their servant you know or people working for them etc.

So you find there are people who are racist head-on without apologies but you also find people who are soul-searching around the whole thing, why did it happen, how can we remedy it etc. It's also equally true from the African side and I admittedly had a fairly limited interaction with Africans in this period of time. When I was in this country many years ago I spent lots more time with Africans. There are lot of suspicions, lot of myths, lot of misgivings circulating around and it is something which needs to be addressed and I must say I am a little sad sometimes when I am at the University of Natal, where I am affiliated you know, to see the process of socialisation between, like you see White and Blacks interacting but very few Indians socialising openly with Blacks. So it is a problem that needs to be addressed in every family actually, it's a personal thing, it is not something that falls within the community, it is something that each individual needs to think about, how can I live in this country and my family without ever, you know, interacting with people who surround me all the time? So I think that it's something which is a serious question that must be addressed.' (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 24 June 1999)

Dr Ashwin Desai suggests that a more positive way of thinking about racism among South African Indians is to see how the discourse of vulnerability shapes these racial forms of thinking:

> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: Now for example, if you ... the industries that have been hurt the most since post 1994 in South Africa and in KwaZulu-Natal are the textile and clothing industries. Those have been the traditional places where Indian women have found employment, they have lost 30 000 jobs in this region alone which - those women there go back to Chatsworth, they then get their lights and water cut, they get evicted, they don't get - they can't send their children to school and how then do they perceive the transition, why should they perceive the transition in a joyous way and in a wonderful way?
>
> *They will blame it on the government, the government happens to be Black and therefore they have racial forms of thinking, but they are not racist.* Yet Vivien Reddy would love the transition, Anand Singh would love the transition because the transition has been wonderful to the big business people because they have made money out of the transition and they are telling us all to be Black and to embrace the Freedom Charter and Nelson Mandela. So there's a schism there and even the notion of the Indian community, I know it's a cliché'd thing as a homogenous entity, is even more exemplified in this post-1994 period and we are not coming to grips

to that. *We are blaming people because they voted for the National Party therefore they are racist and so on, but that's not true.*

The particular material conditions that they are working on forces them to go in a particular direction. So the other day a woman was getting child maintenance grant for R250 and today she is getting R100. Of course it is about the cake getting bigger but that still hurts the person and the individual. Yet a person who is middle class and happens to be Indian and is in parliament and is getting a 15 % increase ..." (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000)

Dr Desai points to the socio-economic changes that the government has set in motion and the effect on the "poor". Although these reforms do not target a particular racial group, "...Those have been the traditional places where Indian women have found employment, they have lost 30 000 jobs in this region alone..." Thus the poor South African Indian has articulated the change as negative since it has affected their livelihood.

Contrary to stereotypes Dr Desai says that these are not "racist" discourses, but "racial forms of thinking...they are not racist". The transition is perceived as "threatening" because it has made the poor Indian more "vulnerable" and "marginalized" in South African society. He is saying that, "... We are blaming people because they voted for the National Party therefore they are racist and so on, but that's not true." These racist discourses are not fueled by narrow non-progressive thinking but rather by the material conditions that the government has created. He is contesting these stereotypes that Indians are racist, by illustrating the real material conditions that have resulted in their "racial forms of thinking".

Stereotyping is, of course, a strategy evident in other racial groups as well, such as the African community, in their relationship with South African Indians. Racial stereotypes, when directed at the Indian community, has heightened the sense of being under threat and fed directly into the discourse of vulnerability. This discourse will be further drawn out in the next section looking at the case study of the *Ilanga* newspaper editorial and the "Amandiya" song.

6.3.3 Case Study: *Ilanga* Editorial and Amandiya

> "They will regain acceptance only if they show that they acknowledge that their former privileges, acquired by virtue of their specific racial identity, give them an obligation in respect of the African people." Prof. Harriet Ngubane (*Daily News*, 26 January 2000)

These strong words articulated by Professor Harriet Ngubane provide the point of departure for this section. During the period under review, controversy surrounding the *Ilanga* editorial and Mbongeni Ngema's "Amandiya" song expose deep tensions in the relationship between Indians and Africans and brought out Indians' feelings of vulnerability.

Ilanga

The *Ilanga* editorial, published on 20 March 1999 expressed hope that one day "a woman would be blessed with giving birth to an Idi Amin in South Africa". This was bound to inflame simmering tensions, knowing what the dictator of Uganda, Idi Amin, did to the Indian community of that country in the 1970s.

In the media, feelings ran high. Media reports ranged from encouraging Indians' need to feel part of the majority, to dismissing Indians' fears as unfounded. To a large extent editorials and letters to the editor in Durban newspapers read mainly by the Indian community, expressed fears of the African community (a political dimension was added by the fact that the comments came from a paper owned by the Inkatha Freedom Party). On the political front there were mixed reactions. The ANC provincial leader S'bu Ndebele described the editorial as a racist and scurrilous attack on the Indian community. It was also rejected by the Democratic Party's Roger Burrows who described it as racially provocative.

Kiru Naidoo, a political analyst at the University of Durban-Westville, tried to explain why the editorial had created the reaction it did, and attempted to explain that the editorial came from a misplaced notion of Indian wealth:

"There is a bizarre illusion that all people of Indian origin are wealthy, in positions of power, or riddled with racist fantasy. Nothing could be more distant from the truth. The Indian community is overwhelmingly working class and victims of colonialism, apartheid and now, it appears a prevailing prejudice. It has agitated in the trade union movement over the past century and gave its sons and daughters in the struggle for our collective liberation. The majority of us who can trace the bulk of our genetic stock to the Indian sub-continent are the children of slaves who for generations have laboured in the plantations of KZN.

Uganda and South Africa are remote comparisons. The Asians who were expelled from Uganda in the 1970s were primarily a merchant class who held the Ugandan economy in stranglehold and who denied the indigenous people economic advancement. The material comfort that some sections of the Indian community have acquired has been despite apartheid and not because of it. It is most unjust to make them scapegoats for the economic ills of our society. "(*The Natal Mercury*, 29 March 1999)

Kiru Naidoo problematises the stereotype that all Indians are wealthy, and states clearly that a large proportion of the community is poor. Professor Fatima Meer also challenges this stereotype:

"There are over one million South African Indians and 76 % live in KZN. Despite their slave-like roots and despite the fact that at least half of the South African Indian population is classifiable today as working class; Indians are perceived as fat-cat shopkeepers. Less than 10 % of the community is engaged in shopkeeping today and this is mainly of the small-corner shop and tuck shop variety. The impression that Indians are wealthy is due to the fact that although they began their lives on the lowest rung of the social and occupation hierarchy they have become the most economically advanced of South Africa's three former disenfranchised peoples." (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 23 November 2000)

In an interview with Devi Sankaree-Govender, a journalist who hosts the Radio Lotus Talkshow "Viewpoint", I enquired whether she had done a programme dealing with the *Ilanga* issue. This is an excerpt of the dialogue that ensued:

Aline: "Recently the Ilanga newspaper carried an editorial piece voicing deeply anti-Indian feelings, such that the reporter hoped that maybe one day, 'a woman would be blessed with giving birth to an Idi Amin in South Africa.' How would you react to this statement?"

Devi Sankaree-Govender: 'The way I reacted to the statement was that I didn't take it too seriously because it was the opinion of one man ... Just

like how I get hundreds of calls on 'Viewpoint' saying that African people are animals, they still live in the bush. I don't take those calls seriously. It was quite sad that the author of the article was given the platform of a highly circulated newspaper to air its views but on the other hand, freedom of speech and freedom of association is what a democracy is all about. But we do not have to necessarily internalise it ... what Indian people did when they heard about it ... 'oh you see blacks want us out of this country, they want us out of here'.

So you see it was not taking the article out of context, the writer may have felt that he had a point ... the writer maybe [was] suffering from the same kind of sickness that the same 60 % of Indians are suffering, the sickness that, 'this is mine, I am a minority group, I must keep it ... I must look after it because of who I am, because I am dying.' It's a strategy of survival. But I did not take it seriously at all."

Aline: "Did you ever do a talkshow? What were the kinds of responses that you received?"

Devi-Sankaree Govender: "I got the response of people here saying, '...see I told you that's why I said that we should have emigrated a long time ago. I don't know why we are living in this rubbish country, people are dying, and there are hijackings. These Africans don't want us here.'

And I regretted doing it because I realised that I am allowing these statements out of context completely, creating hysteria, people were getting upset and wanting to pack their bags and leave. You know just like how it was before the 1994 elections, everybody was buying tins of sardines, and it was doing the same kind of thing. But the reaction I got from people was, the major reaction was that, it was wrong, how could they do it to us? Nobody said that it was wrong, let's place [it] in context and move on. *It was almost like it gave them the ammunition to justify why they have this laager mentality*." (Interview with Ms Devi-Sankaree Govender, 7 September 2000)

Ms Govender's statements clearly show how the Ilanga editorial fed into the racial paranoia that South African Indian's were already feeling. The stereotype that Africans "belong in the bush", is met by a stereotype of Indians as "rich" and "wealthy". These stereotypes were created and maintained during apartheid where Indians were given more privileges and access to resources than Blacks. Thus the stereotype associated with Indians can be seen as an extension of apartheid. Furthermore Ms Govender is clearly articulating, that not only does the

editorial reveal the African stereotypes of Indians but also the Indian stereotypes of Africans. Therefore these racist discourses are apparent in African and Indian frame of references.

Amandiya

"Amandiya" is a song that was written and sung by Mbongeni Ngema in 2000. According to Ngema, the song describes the relationship between Indians and Africans in KwaZulu-Natal. An excerpt from the song indicates the sense of contestation that it portrays. (The full song is cited as the frontispiece to this thesis):

> "Indians don't want to transform
> They have resisted Mandela's (influence)
> The yoke was lighter during the reign of Whites
> At least we knew it was a war of colour/survival.
> And you Leaders of the nation
> You don't want to intervene
> You have been hoodwinked by roti and paku of these Mnanayi people
> (Name emanating from the sound of Indian languages)
>
> Indians don't cast their votes
> Those who do vote for whites
> Yet many of them are parliamentarians
> Many of them are in government…"

Clearly Ngema feels that South African Indians display a reluctance to be a part of South African society and in many ways he suggests that they are racist. The emotions and fears that he captures in this song are, he argues, reflective of a large proportion of the African community. The song was widely debated in the media (newspapers, radio and television). Only few responses by South African Indians are selected here.

Ronnie Govender maintains that Ngema's song perpetuates stereotypes and is extremely dangerous. In a letter to the editor of the *Sunday Times* captioned "Protect us from Ngema's poison", Govender states:

> "Ngema's song was nothing 'short' of a call to blood. It was hate speech at its ugliest and already there have been incidents of racial violence as a result … Ngema's facile claim that he did it to open up debate is

disingenuous – it must be seen for what it is, blatant propagation of stereotypes, unashamedly employing lies and half-truths." (*Sunday Times*, 16 June 2002)

In response to Ngema's contention that South African Indians do not support the ruling majority political party, Govender adds:

"Ngema alludes to voting patterns among Indians. Is this due to racism or the failure of the progressives to provide leadership after the voluntary disbanding of the Natal Indian Congress? When the call came, the Indian community was not found wanting. Hundreds went to jail during the Passive Resistance campaign and hundreds threw themselves behind the Defiance Campaign." (*Sunday Times*, 16 June 2002)

Govender argues that South African Indians were part of the liberation movement and played an important role in defying apartheid, thus calling into question Ngema's proposition that South African Indians are racist.

In a letter to the *Natal Witness*, Deena Padaychee strongly articulates his position on the Ngema song which he dismisses as diatribe. He maintains that Indians together with the other racial groups also suffered under apartheid and he dismisses Ngema's song as racist.

Box 15: "The Intelligence Not to be Racist"
Natal Witness, 5 June 2002
by Deena Padaychee

It is a great pity that the terrible economic straits of South African people, especially Blacks, are being ascribed by a songwriter to a tiny, historically disadvantaged minority (however it must never be forgotten that we are a part of a billion Indians worldwide) that lost hundreds of thousands of homes, businesses, heroic citizens (like Ahmed Timol) and jobs thanks to the brutal apartheid regime.

We are concentrated in KZN because of that racism, which restricted our movement and prevented us from living in spaces like the Free State, Utrecht and Vryheid. Some public figures are saying that race is the reason for the exploitation of some race groups …

Immoral, informed, educated people of every race group often exploit the ignorant and less educated - simply because they can. To say

Many people benefited from, and were even looked up to and admired for being 'good' racists … [it is] this all-pervading air of racism, which still infects segments of all race groups, that has to be combated on every front. It is vital that to say or do anything racist not be acceptable anymore in civilised society. Mr Ngema, you know that West Street until very recently was Whites only. Why then do you speak lies about West Street? Apartheid appealed to the vilest aspects of homo sapiens – their brutality, murderousness, barbarousness. Why then do you do the same? Did you not suffer enough that you want other people to suffer in the same way too?

My people, Mr Ngema, are the African people - whether they are white, coloured, Indian or black. I heal them, I buy from them, I care for them - and they do the same for me and millions like me. I am part of the majority, Mr Ngema - a majority who love and care for SA and all its people. Why don't you join us? I and millions of my

otherwise is to be racist - and of course, Mbongeni Ngema's song Amandiya is racist. We must remember that less that 11 years ago racism was still part of the South African way of life, actively advocated everywhere in SA.	fellow citizens want to see black people living well and prospering - South African whites, Indians; coloureds can and are helping make that happen. It will happen faster if South African Indians and blacks are not in conflict with each other.

A letter to the editor of the *Independent on Saturday* by D Thaver from Hilary in Durban suggests that Indians should not have made such a fuss about the song, or at least should think seriously about the issues it raises. Thaver contends that "Indians should stop marginalizing themselves":

> "Instead of making hypocritical, indignant accusations of racism in the light of Mbongeni Ngema's attempt at getting some dialogue going, Indians should rather ask themselves why it that Africans generally despise them so much is. Using jealousy is a stupid over-simplification of a much more complex issue. As an Indian, I witness daily the attitude that Indians display towards Africans, sometimes in their presence but most times, cowardly in their absence. Indians reading this will instantly recognize the following phrases: 'The darkies are like this' or 'They are all criminals' and my own personal favourite, 'They will always have one leg in the bush.'" (*Independent on Saturday*, 6 July 2002).

The general socio-political consensus in South Africa was finally that Mbongeni Ngema's song constituted something close to hate speech and should be withdrawn. A cartoon in the *Mail and Guardian*, asks what is the place of Mbongeni Ngema's song in the New South Africa? Zapiro depicts its appropriate use as being toilet paper.

Figure 6: "Amandiya" *Mail and Guardian*, **2 May 1999**

The Human Rights Commission asked that Ngema's song be banned from the airwaves, arguing that "It constitutes an incitement to cause harm. The

groundswell of objections coming from KwaZulu-Natal is indicative of the fact that there is a likelihood of violence" (*Natal Mercury*, 16 May 2002). While the song has been banned from being aired again, the airing of the song has definitely revealed the vulnerable relationship that still exists among South African Indians and Africans.

6.4 Discourses of Global Indian Identity

This analysis suggests that South African Indian are "experimenting" with a global Indian identity, through the creation of new cultural/religious and economic links to India, and that is indicative of the development of a diasporic consciousness centred on India as the imagined homeland. It has already been pointed out that this is not the first time that the creation of a diasporic consciousness has occurred: Raman (2003) suggests that there are several such moments in South African Indian history. This dissertation is suggesting that one such moment is occurring currently because the South African Indian community is feeling vulnerability in post-apartheid South African society.

6.4.1 Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO)

This section begins with a discussion of the activities in South Africa of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) as GOPIO is indicative of an attempt to create and maintain a worldwide, global Indian identity. As described in Chapter Two, the new communication technologies of globalization are being harnessed to this end, in particular the Internet. The GOPIO website features the following call: "Global Indian communities: Time is now for Unity." (See Appendix E for screenshot). GOPIO was formed in New York in 1989, in order to provide a platform for "Non-Resident Indians"/People of Indian Origin communities. One of GOPIO's primary aims is to have GOPIO chapters in all the major cities in the world, and the organization is represented in Durban.

In an interview with Ms Shireen Munsamy, the Vice-president of GOPIO Africa, she elaborated on the relationship between GOPIO and the South African Indians:

> **Shireen Munsamy**: "In fact from the very inception - GOPIO began in 1989 in New York, South Africa became a chapter in 1996. And the first president prior to myself had always declared allegiance to South Africa. What we are actually doing in GOPIO is to network people of Indian origin ... India plays a very important role in this in that you cannot ignore your roots and hope to be successful in what you produce. We acknowledge our Indian-ness and we are proud of our Indian-ness and we are proud of our strong work ethic that our ancestors brought to this country that has greatly enriched South Africa. And we would like to think that strong growth of South African culture which my book very strongly documents, that the history and contribution of Indians in South Africa would be very positive in declaring our allegiance to our country, but equally I must hasten to add that we need to know that as South African Indians we are fully acknowledged."(Interview with Ms Shireen Munsamy, 22 May 2001)

The attachment to India is made explicit in this quote: all Indian diasporic communities, including South African Indians, are viewed as united on the basis of their historical relationship to India, and this is to be expressed in terms of new cultural linkages and business relationships. The discussion with Ms Munsamy continued as follows:

> **Aline**: 'Why do you think that there is a need for GOPIO, out of what need did it arise?'

> **Ms Shireen Munsamy**: "... the need for GOPIO arose out of the need to network people of Indian origin. For people of Indian origin, for families to meet, for people to be able to know who their counterparts are in other parts of the world, we are minorities in our different lands of adoption. And minorities that exist within the larger majority have all experienced at some stage a domination of some kind because from the beginning of time, there have been dominant and subservient cultures.

> And I think that many countries post-democracy sense this urgent need to find out who are your counterparts in the rest of the world. What are you experiencing? It gives us a platform to compare, we are not political, we are secular, but it gives us the platform to compare how we are being treated – let's be honest - in different parts of the world. For example if Indians in South Africa are being treated as equal citizens why then should the Indians in Sri Lanka or the Indians in Fiji - we had the removal of the prime minister. Why should that take place? And when the prime minister was removed GOPIO played a role in terms of petition ands visits

internationally in order to demand the reinstatement of the prime minister. We had Uganda in Africa did we not, where Indians overnight were removed? We need an organisation like GOPIO to protect the rights of Indians.' (Interview with Ms Shireen Munsamy, 22 May 2001)

The analysis of Ms Munsamy's discourse suggests that the Indian diaspora are: "...are minorities in our different lands of adoption." GOPIO is set up to protect their rights. Clearly the discourse of "vulnerability" and "marginalization" is shared by the Indian diaspora and is not limited to South Africa alone.

Mr Hassim Seedat, President of GOPIO-Africa, captures the flavour of GOPIO in an article about the fifth global meeting of GOPIO (held in Durban), published in the *Daily News* in 1998, and entitled "Lessons of Success from Adversity". (For the full article, see Appendix F). Mr Seedat's starting point is the dispersion of Indians around the globe, mainly due to British imperialism, and he focuses on the injustices that have been perpetrated against them:

> People of Indian origin found roots outside India over many centuries. Buddha was born in India and the proselytisation of Buddhism was affected by emigrating Indian Buddhists to Japan, China and other Eastern lands. Merchants have been leaving Indian shores for hundreds of years to trade and then settle in foreign parts. Their number increased greatly, especially during British Imperialism due to the export of Indian labour from British India to the colonies between 1830 and 1920 under the Indentured Labour System. The conditions under which these helpless toilers of the soil worked have been described as a new system of slavery. Just over 150 000 indentured Indians were shipped to Natal alone and even larger numbers to the rest of the British colonies.

> In modern times the emigration of professionals and traders continued unabated to countries that welcomed them with open arms. Their contribution to the economy of the Western countries has been substantial. Professionals (doctors, engineers, scientists, etc) qualified in India and other countries at great cost, are net assets to the lands to which they emigrated. Anyone from England will tell you that at practically every street corner there is an Indian pharmacist. In the United States, motels are referred to as the 'Patels'. Among the Indian millionaires in England are a large number of those formerly from Uganda before Idi Amin expelled them penniless from the country. He had accused them of parasitism. Now the Ugandan Government is desperately trying to woo back Indians into the country to strengthen the economy." (Hassim Seedat, "Lessons of success from adversity" *Daily News*, 7 July 1998)

The fifth GOPIO conference was held at the Durban Convention Centre from 10-13 July 1998. According to the newspaper account cited above, a wide range of prominent cultural commentators and politicians accepted the invitation either to attend, present papers, or send messages of support, including Kader Asmal (then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry), Dullar Omar (Minister of Transport), Dr Ashwin Desai, Prof. Fatima Meer, Pravin Gordhan, and Devi Rajab. Tellingly, the final day was "devoted to a business session" in line with GOPIO's objective "to mobilize the financial, intellectual and professional resources of people of Indian origin for their mutual development and advancement" (*Daily News*, 7 July 1998).

However GOPIO has been criticized. Largely the criticism that is leveled against GOPIO is that it is an "elitist" organisation that benefits mostly the wealthier Indians. In addition it questions South African Indians' allegiance to South Africa: for some it is problematic that an organization is attempting to create a global identity just at a time when many are focusing on the need for Indians to identify more with South Africa. These were the kind of issues that came up in the interview that I conducted with Ms Shireen Munsamy.

> **Aline**: "In your role in GOPIO, what kind of changes has it created in South Africa?"

> **Shireen Munsamy**: "GOPIO has a long way to go in South Africa. GOPIO began in South African under the auspices of a gentleman who was a business person and because the person was in the business industry GOPIO in the first two years was perceived as an organisation that was going to promote business alone but that is not the case. GOPIO has four sectors, academic, business, culture and youth and our headquarters are presently in Malaysia where the secretary-general of GOPIO is based. Our international president was in Malaysia and is presently from Mauritius and we have 21 country chapters, so in South Africa in particular the awareness of GOPIO is still developing and is still growing.

> What has changed since that was part of the question? GOPIO in South Africa is no longer being viewed as business orientated because it has many roles to fulfill. I think that the primary goal of GOPIO is to network people of Indian origin for mutual benefit and in so doing strengthen our countries of domicile, it is not exclusive."

Aline: "It is not exclusive?"

Shireen Munsamy: "No."

Aline: "... because that could be one of the criticisms leveled against GOPIO, for its creating an exclusive organisation whereas South African Indians should be thinking about becoming part of south African society but here are South African Indians are becoming part of an organisation that is strengthening the network and the links within the Indian diaspora. So you are saying then that it not an exclusive organisation?'

Ms Shireen Munsamy: "I also - I think to allay fears - and I think that your question is a very good one because it ranges from your concern, to the concern of even the High Commissioner to India. The South African High Commissioner asked a similar question at our 6th international convention. And in my paper presentation in January of this year in New Delhi where the Prime Minister of India was present, the political ambassadors and South Africa's political ambassador was very proud of the comments that I made on behalf of the organisation ...

As part of our speech one made several references to Thabo Mbeki's speech, 'I am an African' and the so-called African Renaissance, and in order to be fair to also declare what is the role of Indians in the Renaissance? And how can we mutually assist and benefit from each other? And I think that, about the diaspora, ... people who have left the point of origin, it is only natural that as children that leave the mother, it is only natural to turn back after many many years to want to know more about the root or the mother. And the knowledge that you get sustains you, it does not make you exclusive. In no way does it make you the kind of person that will then say that 'I belong to India'.

I think that if you took a survey there are 1, 4 million of the 22 million of the diaspora settled in South Africa. If you did this wonderful survey on Indians in South Africa, how many would go back and settle in India, I am not going to tell you what the answer to that would be and perhaps you will find in the answer that as much as one loves India, and one is very proud of what she has done in terms of how we were able to build resilience in our lands of adoption, nevertheless it is certainly the case that South African Indians beyond doubt for example with the formation of the NIC (Natal Indian Congress), the first political party on the continent of Africa in the field of culture, in the field of social work, in the field of science, in the field of culture, South African Indians by the pure principle of self-help gave their sweat and toil to make South Africa the economy it is today. In no way from 1860 to date has South African Indians displayed exclusivity." (Interview with Ms Shireen Munsamy, 22 May 2001)

Ms Munsamy does not explicitly answer the question about the place of Indians in the African Renaissance, an issue that was raised earlier in this chapter. However she wants to assert that being part of GOPIO does not exclude Indians from also being part of the African Renaissance. It is also interesting that Indian is seen as the "mother", or the "root" – roots and routes are increasingly a preoccupation for South African Indians, but how much of this is due to the proselytizing efforts of Indian-based organizations hoping to build development capacity in India?

6.4.2 Loyalty to South Africa, Loyalty to India? Geographies of Emigration, Citizenship and Cricket

I decided to take Ms. Munsamy up on her suggestion and to explore the geography of potential emigration of young Indian South Africans. I also probed the way in which their loyalties to their different "homelands" (South Africa and India) were expressed in terms of their support for cricket teams.

Emigration and Citizenship

The analysis of the questionnaire suggests that if young South African Indians decided to emigrate, it would not be to India. Of the 45 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, only 9 % would emigrate to India (i.e. 91 % of the sample population would choose not to).

Table 3:
If you had to emigrate, which country would you want to emigrate to?

United Kingdom	40%
India	9%
Australia	22%
America	20%
Other (state country)	Germany 2%, Scotland 2%, Holland 2%, Italy 2%, Arabia 2%

Thus the formation of a global Indian identity will probably not result in South African Indians returning to India but is rather indicative of identification with India.

The question of citizenship is perhaps more complex and it too raises questions about South African Indians' "loyalty" to South Africa were they to develop stronger nationalistic links with India. Recently, the Indian government launched an initiative allowing NRI (Non Resident Individual) dual citizenship to India. Mr Ajit Kumar, South African Consul General for India, explains:

> "The Indian government was offering 'PIO Cards' (Person of Indian Origin cards) which would be valid for 15 years. The card will offer no citizenship, political or voting rights. Bu the benefit is that people who qualify can spend a period of 15 years in India without requiring a visa entry or a work permit. India does not necessarily want members of the diaspora to become citizens of India, but if someone wants to work in India or have their children study there then we can help." (*Daily News*, 6 October 2002)

The "PIO Cards" sparked controversy in the local media. The caption to a piece on this issue, "South African Indians lukewarm on PIO" (*Daily News*, 6 October 2002) sums up the reaction to "dual citizenship". In this article the journalist captures the reactions of political and cultural Indian leaders. The following are extracts:

> **Ms Ela Gandi**: "… the majority of Indians in SA are third and fourth generation Indians. For many, South Africa is the only country they know and many may not have any roots in India since their forefathers arrived here in 1860. We have to build our national identity and be real South Africans."

> **Criminologist Prof. Anshu Padaychee**: "Most South African Indians have no close links to India, we were born and bred here and we were involved in the struggle against apartheid. However all South African Indians did have cultural ties with India, but those were all the ties they had. The Indian government should not lose sight of the problem they might create for people living as minority communities and the divisions they might create."

> **Playwright Mr Ronnie Govender**: "Our country was moving beyond nationalism based on race, ethnicity and rigid religiosity. The Indian community has clearly affirmed its South African identity. This identity however does not preclude the community from also affirming its rich cultural and religious heritage, a right guaranteed by our constitution. At this sensitive stage in rebuilding our nation, a form of dual citizenship would send out a contrary message, the kind of message that some would gleefully exploit with painful consequences."

While South Africans may claim a global Indian identity, then, this should not be taken as identification with an alternative national identity or even an affinity with their "roots". This is a symbolic attachment, illustrated through their stronger cultural, linguistic, religious and business links. Of course, it is no less significant for that.

Cricket

Mcdonald and Ugra (1999) maintains that "... sport is a sphere of activity which expresses, in concentrated forms, the values, prejudices, fissures, divisions, tensions and unifying symbols of a society." It can be argued that the geography of cricket[57] is indicative of diasporic consciousness amongst South African Indians, since a substantial number of South African Indians support the Indian team. (This was particularly the case during the apartheid period, when Indians disenfranchised in South Africa protested this by boycotting the South African cricket team and loudly supporting India instead). By locating these tensions within larger South African society, the tensions that are manifested in cricket provide a valuable lens through which to view the South African Indian community, revealing the negotiation of identity between two different national or geopolitical identifications, with India or South Africa.

In the analysis of the questionnaire administered to 45 students, the following results were obtained.

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57 See Mcdonald and Ugra (1999) for the examination of cricket in the British context in relation to recently immigrated Asians

Table 4: Which cricket team do you support in general?[58]

India	27%
South Africa	64%

Table 5:
If both these teams were playing against each other, which team would you support?

India	33%
South Africa	60%

An analysis of the results shows that there is in general greater support for the South African team, even if India plays against them. However there is a 5 % increase in support for India when India plays against South Africa. Students were asked to indicate the reasons why they supported either India or South Africa. The reasons cited were as follows:

Table 6: Aggregated Results of Cricket Supporters

Support South Africa	Support India
• I am South African and I reside in South Africa and I support my country of residence. Furthermore South Africa is a better team.	• SA's team is made up of older people who need to retire, but India has young cricketers who are developing this strategy is basically "young blood".
• I live in South Africa and not India although I am an Indian, South Africa is my country.	• I feel that the South African cricket team is racist sometimes and they play aggressively which in my opinion is not necessary.
• I was born in South Africa - so I would support the South African team.	• The South African team does not embrace the concept of different races in SA and hence consists of mainly players of one race.
• SA is my country, nationality. Although I am from Indian descent, I am South African born and bred. I am a South African Indian and not an Indian South African.	• I feel that the South African team is racist.
• I believe that I am South African, I just happen to be Indian in race. I support all South African teams.	• I don't feel that the South African team is truly representative of SA. • Yes, I have a sense of belonging with the Indian cricket team. SA team only focuses on Blacks and Whites and no Indians. SA is
• I am a South African and therefore I will support my country and also because they	my country but India is my team.

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58 The reason why the sample does not equal a 100% is because 3 did not respond at all, since they did not follow cricket.

are good at what they do. • I consider myself patriotic to my country of birth. • I would support SA, because I am a South African. • I think that one should be patriotic to one's country, irrespective of differences in caste, colour and creed.	• SA is my country that I live in but my origin was India and I am an Indian, and therefore I will support them. • I used to support SA whole heartedly but during the match between SA and India, Alan Donald was openly terribly racist toward Indians and from then on I support India. • My culture is in India, so I support my culture.

Patriotism and a feeling of "being South African" are the major reasons why younger South African Indians support South Africa. However the responses to the support for India are quite candid as there is a general feeling that the South African team is racist. Where the Indian team is supported, this they argue is an oppositional strategy deployed to demonstrate their discontent about the lack of representation of South African Indians in the national cricket team. An article in the *Sunday Tribune* also examines this issue of South African cricket.

Box 16: "They wear SA colours but they aren't our boys" (*Sunday Tribune*, 19 March 2000)	
Many South African Indian homes have seen pitted against older generations of the family in a very serious matter - that of the cricket series between South Africa and India. Yasantha Naidoo investigates. "I don't like cricket, I love it", was South Africa's national theme song for the 1992 World Cup, which saw a surge in patriotic support for "Hansie's boys" particularly in the Indian community. However this support, mainly from the younger generation, is still challenged by the staunch loyalists who are hardcore Indian supporters and refuse to support a team without any Indian players. When it comes to supporting their national cricket team, there is no rival to the almost fanatical following of Indian nationals. These same fans will be happy to know that their sentiment is shared by many South African Indians. "My heart lies with India" said cricket-crazy provincial deputy director of sport and recreation Sumayya Khan. "Although I must admit that when I am with a large group of South African supporters I feel embarrassed because I stand out like a sore thumb. Khan, who is actively involved with the provincial female cricket team and also coaches, said she didn't feel 'comfortable' supporting the South	chosen for a national side I suppose I will have to deal with my feelings then, but now I know I cannot support the South African side." Sindra Chetty, president of the Chatsworth United Cricket Club, which has produced two provincial cricket players, said although he "he yearned for the day when he could proudly wear my South African cricket gear' he was not comfortable cheering for the national side. "I am not very happy with the rate of transformation of cricket in this province. There must be a shift from cosmetic to genuine changes before I can be patriotic to the team. Many people are patriotic about the government and the country but the scars of apartheid are still prevalent when it comes to things like sport ... The racial jibes and taunts are still there, which tends to bring back memories of the old days. A lot still has to be done when it comes to changing the attitudes of some white players who don't have the respect of the public ... I am aware many youngsters are patriotic towards the South African team but this is because they don't understand the upheaval of the past and it is therefore easier for them to make the transition to support South Africa." He said that there were also thousands of people who supported any team which played against South Africa. Provincial cricketer Dhesigan Reddy said he was

African cricket team.	"without doubt" a South African supporter. "I am
"We've done so much for development but to think that we haven't produced an Indian player within the past 17 years of development cricket is unbelievable. There are, however a number of reasons for this."	heavily involved in the provincial side and I have hopes of playing in a national team, but I realise that many Indians don't support South Africa because they feel they don't have one of their own playing in the side. I can understand that because
This sentiment is echoed by die-hard Indian supporter Denisha Reddy, a provincial cricket player and law student. "I am not patriotic at all, mainly because of South African players. For example, when they play Australia they show respect to those players but when they are in India they have no respect for Indian cricketers. I respect their ability but I would not support South Africa for anything ... There is a lot of rivalry at home. My mother supports South Africa and I can't understand this, particularly when she is from the generation which experienced the hardships of apartheid. Many of my friends also support South Africa. It's very ironic that I support India although I play for the provincial side. If I am	some of family members and friends support India for this same reason ... However my immediate family and I feel that we were born in South Africa and have a loyalty to our country. The fact that there is no Indian cricketer in the national side, however, is a sensitive issue."
	Mysore Lokesh, India's Consul General in Durban said, while 80 % of the Indian supporters were fanatical about their cricket side, there were spectators who "recognise talent" and "loved South African players ... Hansie and Jonty Rhodes are very popular in India and although I haven't watched India play locally, I am aware that there are supporters of the Indian team in South Africa."

In general, the older generation supports the Indian cricket team, displaying their awareness of the political aspects of the game, while the younger generation supports the South African team. However this does not hold true in all cases, as the above article indicates. The younger generations South African Indians also display an awareness of the political aspects of the game and in many cases reflect on the South African team being "racist", especially when they play against India. Sympathy with the Indian team is indicative of a sense of belonging to India, and this is clearly an ethnic identification.

The contestation over which team to support is indicative of the tensions that South African Indians express through the game of cricket[59]. By indicating support for a team that is Indian, they are displaying a greater diasporic consciousness, revealing their discontent regarding the lack of representation of Indian players in the national cricket team. In addition, they claim that the South African cricket players are to a large extent "racist".

6.4.3 Reactions to the "New Wave" Indian

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[59] See Blacks in Whites by A Desai, V Padaychee, K Reddy, G Vahed (2002) for a more thorough account of the politics of South African cricket history.

New linkages with the Indian sub-continent are not always experienced by South African Indians as positive, particularly when the emigration is in the other direction. This section explores a sharpening of the sense of identity of South African Indians in the face of the arrival in South Africa of Indians from the rest of the world. Their sense of cohesiveness as a *South African* Indian community was magnified as expressed in the public sphere.

Dr Ashwin Desai writes about the New Indians in South Africa:

> "... The demise of apartheid and the direct links with the Indian sub-continent have seen an influx of immigrants in the area. The newly arrived immigrants like to tease that unlike our forbears who came by ship, they came by plane. They are the New Indians ... They have arrived after 1990 seeking to make their lives and futures in South Africa. There are literally thousands of them in South Africa." (*Post*, 22-25 November 2000)

The presence of these new arrivals in South Africa is evident in the Indian restaurants that proliferate in Durban's city space, in the form of "tandoori" and other culinary pleasures. In addition, the Indian-owned information technology sector has made large investments in South Africa. But, what does this mean for South African Indians? How does the arrival of the "new Indians" affect their sense of place here?

Mr Farouk Khan, a leading journalist, paints a dismal picture of the impact the New Indians will have for the South African Indians:

> **Mr Farouk Khan**: 'They [South African Indians] will die, they have refused to adapt ... Over the next thirty years all the descendents of indentured Indians will die because they have failed to adapt or were able to cover the recommended niche in the future of this country, this is by their own narrow-mindedness and I don't think that any of them can be saved, the next thirty years they will be wiped out ... Right now at the moment South Africa has about 150 000 Indians who are citizenship holders of India who have come to this country to do business, they are big business people, they come from Hong Kong to escape Chinese rule, they have come from India they set up major businesses, high-tech businesses, I.T. businesses that kind of thing, they are known as non-resident Indians. Non-resident Indians means Indians who are not living in India and these people are a different breed, they will work for

anybody, they set up businesses, they set up banks, sophisticated I.T. companies, they manufacture motor cars, they manufacture trains, they manufacture real big things, this is the new breed of Indian that is going to come and take over.

Now if you look at them they pray, they eat Indian food, they hold up all the cultures, they celebrate their festivals and they are more hard-working and industrious, apart from being more intelligent, so you are going to get a new-wave Indian, who has arrived. Already the entire public health service in KwaZulu-Natal is run by doctors who are Indian citizens and not Indian South Africans. The Indian South Africans who have been here for 140 years are coming to the end of their tenure.' (Interview with Mr Farouk Khan, 1 December 2000)

The wide use of derogatory terms such as "paki" is an indication that South African Indians feel threatened by the new immigrants. Mr Khan argues that these people are more industrious, more religious, cleverer – in fact more truly *Indian* – and thus likely to take opportunities away from an already threatened group, the South African Indians. Thus South African Indians' sense of alienation also extends to the threat they feel is posed by the New Wave Indian.

6.5 Fragmenting Discourses: Other Religious/Cultural/Political Identifications with India

"Indians are still tied to the umbilical cord of 'mother India' and appear to abandon mainstream life. They have retreated into a cultural embryo, seeking refuge in religion." (Deputy Mayor, Logie Naidoo, 12 October 1999, *Daily News*)

"This is a group of people in this country that are incredibly divided, they are divided along religious lines, they are divided along linguistic lines, they are divided along class lines, they are divided along all other kinds of professional lines, yet daily we are told about an Indian identity and I ask you what this Indian identity is? In this current environment we are seeing identities recede and identities re-emerge..." (Interview with Dr Adam Habib, 9 November 2000)

For the reasons discussed above and in the previous chapter, Indian culture and religion have become paramount features of many South African Indians' lives. However this is a complex issue, as contestation over religious and cultural

identities in the public sphere demonstrates. While there is a heightened sense of religious and cultural identity in the South African Indian community, there is fragmentation along religious and linguistic lines. The articulation of religious and cultural identities is often also an overt identification with a diasporic community or the imagined homeland, India; but often the identification is with particular ethnicities or religious groups within India. Sometimes this is associated with a particular region of the sub-continent and thus carries with it a political content that has apparently little to do with contemporary South Africa. Gans (1996: 146) insightfully suggests what such an expression of ethnicity based on regional differentiation might be based on in the case of diasporic communities:

> "symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways but above all, I suspect, it is characterised by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant population, or that of the old country; a love for and pride in tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour."

These distinctive identities that are being expressed in the public sphere are thus indicative of a "nostalgic allegiance" to the country of origin. They are complex in nature and indicate fragmenting identifications with different aspects of, and different regions of, India.

In the interviews, cultural commentators were asked, first, whether they thought there was a heightened sense of identification with India among South African Indians, and, second, whether or not this was characterised by the (divisive or fragmenting) strengthening of sub-identities based around religion, language and culture. Professor Adam Habib felt that both were the case:

> **Aline**: "Do you think that there's a heightened sense of sub identities being formed?"

> **Dr Adam Habib**: 'In the social realm there's a whole series of heightened identities ... I think that in the social realm on the one hand we are seeing an emergence of sub-identities and on the other hand you are getting the erosion of sub-identities. And in the political realm there are some identities that are emerging and some identities are receding.

Let me give you an example, it is true that caste identities are beginning to disappear, so for instance when I got married 10 or 15 years ago my family opposed the fact that I was marrying somebody although I was Muslim and the other person was Muslim, *her ancestry lay in another part if India,* she was Surti Gujrati and I was Muslim and my family opposed it. Now 10 years later those identities don't manifest themselves as starkly as they did 15 years ago, so you are beginning to see an erosion of what I call caste identity, but you are seeing the re-emergence of other forms of identity, particularly religious identity.

Now you will see young people far more conscious of religious identity than they were 10, 15 years ago, you are seeing young Muslim people wearing garbs and mobilising on religious questions, and they are getting Hindu students mobilising around religious questions, and Christian students. So what you are beginning to see in certain areas is a re-emergence of religious identities and the entrenchment of religious identities, so what you are getting is not a clean picture, it's not a neat picture of simply the erosion of identities, or the re-emergence." (Interview with Dr Adam Habib, 9 November 2000)

Dr Adam Habib thus argues that old identifications are being rejected in favour of new ones: while "caste" identifications may be eroding, there is a re-emergence of religious identities.[60] So "erosion" and "emergence" are occurring simultaneously.

In the questionnaire administered to 45 students studying at the University of Natal, the responses to questions about issues of religion and culture in their lives were revealing. These were South African Indian students, within the age group of 18-29.

Table 7: What religion do you belong to?

Religion	
Muslim	4 %
Hindu	67 %
Christian	23 %

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[60] Clearly this is not just a South African phenomenon or even an Indian one: Manuel Castells (1997) in his analysis also points to the articulation of new fundamentalist religious identities, particularly forms of Christian identity.

Other	3 % (Other),
	2 % (Sanathan Dharma),
	2 % (Telegu)

Table 8: How important is religion in your life?

Not so important	13 %
Important	36 %
Very Important	27 %
Extremely Important	24 %

Of the respondents, 67 % were Hindu, 23 % Christian, 4 % Muslim and 6 % belonged to other religious denominations. The number of students who regarded religion of little importance in their lives was very low (only 13 %), with 87 % indicating that religion was important in their lives on various gradations. The overwhelming majority of the sample was Hindu (67 %), and it is thus it is reasonable to assume that religion plays an important to extremely important role in the lives of these young people.

Ms Ela Gandhi, the granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, and an ANC MP, strongly states that the Indian community is fragmented, along lines of political beliefs, religion and class. There are numerous enclaves of difference:

> **Ms Ela Gandhi:** "That in itself shows the fragmented nature of the people of Indian origin in this country. We are fragmented in terms of language, we are fragmented in terms of religion, we are fragmented in terms of political beliefs and for the 1.2 million people we are more divided than any other race group in this country ..." (Interview with Ms Ela Gandhi, 6 October 2002)

Dr. Adam Habib supports this, asserting: "My own take is there isn't a homogeneous Indian response, that the Indian community is largely, always has been a divided community ... When you go back to your mum or dad and my own family etc there's caste differences, there's class differences, there's religious differences" (Interview with Dr Adam Habib, 9 November 2000).

In the analysis of the media and interview material one of the key discourses identified in the public sphere is the tendency among South African Indians of

various linguistic backgrounds to assert their distinctive identities. As Singh (1998) notes, this has manifested itself in various ways, especially in the choice of marriage partners, cuisine patterns, deity worship, the days of the week in which people choose to fast and other regionally specific customs in South Africa. Singh suggests that because historically the colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid state, always treated South African Indians as an *undifferentiated group*, South African Indians were left to pursue their cultural and linguistic interests independent of state support. This created competition for much-needed resources, and resulted in the Tamil (South) and Hindi (North) competing for the scarce resources.

These distinctive identities that are being expressed in the public sphere are indicative of a "nostalgic allegiance" to the host country. As Gans notes, this heightened sense of distinctive identification is as a result of greater diasporic consciousness. Cultural fragmentation is demonstrable in both the public and private spheres. That is, individuals display their allegiance to different linguistic groupings at home and in the media. The next section will explore the fragmentation of the Indian community as demonstrated in the *geography of the airwaves* during the period under review.

6.5.1 The Contested Geography of the Airwaves

In the media during this period there are numerous reports of the increasing fragmentation of the South African Indian community, into North (Hindi) and South (Tamil). The claim is that displays of regional geographic affiliation with India are occurring more strongly than in the past. This research largely supports that contention.

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate fragmentation played out in the public sphere, as demonstrated by the North/South India divide in the discursive spaces created by local Durban radio. Each radio station attempts to create

different "imagined communities", which have a clear ethnic linguistic geography linked to India. These identifications can be understood in terms of South African Indians' search for authenticity and in the process the growth of a greater diasporic consciousness. The controversy around Lotus FM is indicative of the cultural dynamics of this struggle.

Box 17 United we stand, if we tried
(*Tribune Herald*, 28 November 1999)

The dreaded north versus south debate has reared its head very publicly, Yasantha Naidoo reports.

It is sad that the current onslaught against public broadcaster Lotus FM, which should have been about egos and personalities, has become a focus on linguistic backgrounds.

In the latest example highlighting the division between some north Indians, who are mainly Hindi-speaking and south Indians who are mainly Tamil-speakers, the newly appointed Lotus FM station manager has been at the receiving end of criticism for changes made to the station.

These changes include the appointment of new presenters and the introduction of new programme formats.

Letter writers to local newspapers were quick to put pen to paper, and some asserted that the changes made were in keeping with Veeran's south Indian "linguistic heritage". Not too long ago similar allegations dogged former station managers, Fakir Hassen and Khalik Sheriff when listeners claimed the station was biased against south Indians.

Community radio station Radio Phoenix has also been accused of north and south Indian bias because of its music and board composition. Lenasia listener Soraya Cassim was the first to express her dissatisfaction over the changes. She claimed one appointment was based on ethnicity. "To Veeran, as station manager you need to give us a plausible reason for hiring the mediocre Rangappa (other than linguistic lineage), when you have far more dynamic and talented presenters in your stable."

Another reader Jyothi Seebran, not only emphasized the difference between north and south, but also said: "It seems that the station manager, Mr Naresh Veeran, is intent on fulfilling his "Tamil Tiger" ideology by hiring mainly new presenters from the south Indian sector of the community, while marginalizing (and removing) north Indian presenters. There is no doubt Lotus FM has a wide pool available and talented presenters to choose from, yet Veeran

Has chosen to put in place a large number of new (and overtly South Indian) voices of dubious talent, thereby drawing attention to his own lack of broadcasting and management experience.

When the first batch of Indians arrived in SA, they came as families or from the same village, united by their common dialect, dress and food. They were brought to SA to work as indentured labour on sugarcane fields.

Traditionally, inhabitants of north India are fairer because of the climate and they speak mainly Hindi. Those from the south are typically darker because of the harsh sunny climate, and they generally speak Tamil."

Veeran said he was amazed at the accusations of being anti-north Indian. He said: "Over the past 100 years or so we overcame our personal and group prejudices to forge ahead. As a community which in retrospect we never actually were, we were forced to endure oppression, hardship and pain. However, we succeeded together, by overcoming our internal divisions. It, therefore, hurts me to see that although we have come so far, built so many bridges, secured a number of relationships, we still use exactly what kept us strong to divide us."

Historian Hassim Seedat pointed out that according to the history of the 1860 indentured labourers, farmers employed groups as they disembarked from the ships that arrived from India. As a result, they were geographically based groups of people working together, which resulted in closer bonds. When you look at the records, employers preferred south Indians because they worked harder. One of the reasons for this was they came from an agricultural background and assimilated quicker than north Indians." Seedat said that in modern Indian political history, north Indians have controlled the country. "South Indians have been given the short shrift and generally regarded as second cousins. This is one of the reasons that Tamil Nadu has been trying to gain independence from the rest of the sub-continent." He said while people were intrinsically the same, they were separated by their regional differences. The role of the media was very important in preventing further division, he said. "There has been a lot of debate about the airspace on radio, for example, given to Hindi songs. This is the kind of area where the media can play an important

	role."

Within the discourse of fragmentation between North and South Indians, rhetorical claims range from assertions of primordial identity, to the accusation of prejudice, to the desire of one group to acquire hegemony over another. In terms of the first claim, some south Indians assert that they are the only indigenous people of India. The effect is to view the North Indians as part of the marauding masses from other continents. A correspondent identifying himself as South Indian wrote to the local newspaper, *The Post*. Calling himself "Dravidian", he put forward the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT), asserting that North Indians are actually of European origin and as such, are foreigners (*Post,* 12 October 1999). This device of "categorization" serves to entrench the differences in the community, along lines of linguistic affiliation.

During the period under review, such debates were much in evidence on the airwaves. It must be noted that the history of public broadcasting among Indians in South Africa is rooted in the country's racial politics. South African Indians were restricted in their access to and representation in electronic media, through various pieces of legislation. During apartheid South African Indians were provided with an hour of Indian music on Sunday mornings only. All five major linguistic groups, namely, Tamil, Hindi, Telegu, Gujerati and Urdu had to contend with this allocation by sharing it equally. In the current context, cultural symbols such as music serve as a source of identity and cultural assertion. Contestation over music, becomes a crucial site for cultural struggle and a further indication of a greater linguistic diasporic consciousness.

Radio Lotus was set up in order to meet the cultural needs of the South African Indian community, which during apartheid was under the strict control of the state. It was not an easy task to satisfy the range of linguistic groups in the South African Indian population. The two main contending groups were the Hindi and Tamil-speaking. Radio Lotus station management agreed to a 50/50 policy giving equal time to both North and South Indian music. The ex-station manager of

Radio Lotus, Dr Naresh Veeran, reflected in interview with him on subsequent events at the station:

Dr Naresh Veeran: "You see, there are so many things, I mean I have got some of my own theories about what happened. The bottom line is that Indian South Africans, up to now many of them still identify themselves on which part of India, or identify themselves not so much on where they come from in India, where their ancestors come from, but the *language* that their ancestors spoke, be it Hindi or Tamil or Telegu or Gujerati or Muslim, Urdu. But I don't think its saying 'I am Hindu, I am a Tamil', but Tamil is a language, it's like saying I am Yiddish as opposed to saying I am Jewish.

But anyway the bottom line was I think over the years in a minority group, it's also made up of lots of small sub-groups. These minority group and these sub-groups also start tending to cling onto anything that reinforces who they are, who they feel they are in an effort to make them stronger or whatever it is, but I think what happened here is that you have a situation where you have a group of people who are clinging onto something that really isn't there, it probably never was there.

I mean you have two or three generations later of people who are clinging onto the fact that Tamil and Hindi and what have you, when all it does is a reminder of a long distant past, of something, of who you are or what you are or what you think would be what your perception ... So what has happened, you finally come into the 1990s and you have got mostly an older crowd who suddenly are becoming very - almost militant in their attitude in what they feel should be played and what shouldn't be played. So people of North Indian origin suddenly looks at this, and everything that speaks Hindi, Tamil or Telegu or all those things, so much so that now you got a group, you have two different camps listening to Lotus who want a slightly bigger share of the pie in terms of our programming, the programme should be a little this way inclined.

And so I said 'No I am putting my foot down, I personally come from a mixed background, my mum and dad come from two different religions, languages whatever and I grew up in a way in which I said that it wasn't important to me.' And I know lots of people whom it wasn't important to, and plus we are living in an environment where it's not a factor anymore, it's such silly thing to do, to fight about the language you speak. I mean communication - that is what it is ultimately and to fight over something like that, we have so many other problems. So when people started coming to us about this North/South divide I put my foot down. 'You choose, if you can see yourself as a Tamil, then you must go back to India

and live in Tamil Nadu. If you see yourself as a Hindu and you live your life as a Hindu then you must live your life fully as a Hindu.'

A lot of these people don't see themselves as South African, yet they and their ancestors have been living here for over 140 years, but they don't see themselves as African, as if they are going to go back sometime in the future, go back to the motherland or whatever it is, but they know they are not going to go there. So I don't know, whatever it is, they use this station. For example as, suddenly this is your imagined link and it plays itself in so many ways, different cultural groups, different language groups who come here and put pressure on the station to do something. And I say that 'I have an open door policy; that's your attitude - the door is open, please leave.'" (Interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, 3 November 2000)

Dr Naresh Veeran powerfully articulates this contestation over the radio air-space as the construction of an "imaginary link" to India. Due to his "mixed background" he explains that he did not want to entertain these divisions that he felt were silly. However these debates eventually led to him resigning. Radio Lotus listeners argued that because of Veeran's stronger South Indian influence, there was a bias in Radio Lotus management and programming reflecting this. Strong opposition from members of the community associated with North India led to Veeran resigning.

This particular brand of linguistic ethnic division was also contested in Radio Phoenix[61]. Radio Phoenix, a relatively new radio station attempting to create a different imagined community of listeners, was also dogged by the North/South controversy. This is captured by a headline in *Post* when the controversy was at its height: "North V. South 'bias' boils over at Radio Phoenix" (*Post*, 10 June 1999).

In the midst of this conflict over air-space, a new radio station emerged, Radio Hindvani. Radio Hindvani has a clear North Indian bias. As Mr Hemraj, the station manager explains, the station's purpose is to "promote and propagate, with active community participation, the Hindi language, religion and culture through

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51 Radio Phoenix was named after a major South African Indian working class township. The station actually started off as a hobby and as a pirate radio station.

the medium of quality broadcasting." (*Post*, 6 October 1999). Critics question the exclusivity of this particular radio station, which is attempting to create an imagined community of listeners who identify with North India. In defense of the exclusivity of Radio Hindvani, Dr Hemraj states clearly that it is his constitutional right to propagate the Hindi language, especially since due to Westernisation and Africanisation it is in decline:

> "Language propagation is part of our project and I can't see how it polarizes the communities. When South Africa was cut off from India it was up to local people to continue the religious, cultural and social practices. We have no qualms therefore about using this very powerful medium which was not available to us in the past, to help us achieve this. What do people lose by learning Hindi? This is not an attempt to divide the community but rather to build bridges. Every group must be allowed to promote its cultural heritage and its language, it's a constitutional right." (*Post*, 11 October 1998)

Others feel that the establishment of a Hindi Radio Station will only serve to further fragment the South African Indian community. One reader to a local newspaper articulated his response quite strongly, when he said: "The *roti-ous*[62] (Hindi-speakers) are side-lining us again. Why does there have to be a station only for them, what about the other groups?" (*Post*, 11 October 1998, See Appendix F for complete article). Yana Pillay, Vice-President of the South African Tamil Federation, also has concerns:

> "For some reason there is a strong leaning towards the north in many aspects of our cultural activities and media and I believe this stems from India, where the north Indian sector controls the government. We believed our linguistic group was being marginalized and this continues today, we the Tamil people are consciously marginalized. Our organization recently took this matter up with the Indian consulate. The consulate has hosted many public functions with most of the cultural entertainment leaning towards the north. This doesn't promote inter-linguistic harmony.
>
> While the idea of a radio station promoting a language was 'great', we understood why people were concerned about its promoting only one language. Hindvani is an excellent idea and we have congratulated the Hindi Shiksha Sangh, but in the long term we believe a common radio promoting all languages is vital. There is no need for division. For too

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62 North Indians, mainly Hindi and Gujerati-speaking are often referred to as "roti-ous" because of their affinity for the Indian leavened bread

long the Indian community has been downtrodden and we shouldn't be fighting. In the end we have to be strong to survive as a united community." (*Post*, 11 October 1998, See Appendix G for complete article)

Mr Pillay suggests that the geography of politics from the Indian subcontinent is transplanted to South Africa and continues to manifest itself.

Mr Rajbansi's Minority Front party strategically congratulated Radio Hindvani on its launch. The close and constitutive link between culture and political processes is demonstrated by the following advertisement placed by Mr Rajbansi in the local newspaper. In the advert, he attempts to appear even-handed, encouraging the establishment of a Tamil Radio Station.

Figure 7: Minority Front and Radio Hindvani

6.5.3 Language as a Marker of Regional Identity

"I was opposed to the closure of the [UDW Eastern Languages] Departments because there are a fair number of Hindus as well as other Indians, irrespective of their religious background, who are still inclined towards their languages. And a very good indication of that is the extent

> to which Indians follow Hindu movies, make Indian movie
> stars their idols, and also veer towards visiting India before
> they would want to visit any other part of the world. And
> to that extent language becomes an important basis for
> communication with people in India. *But also it's a
> question of identity.*" (Interview with Dr Anand Singh, 17
> November 2000)

Language struggles are about meaning and they are also struggles over different cultural identities. This is clearly demonstrated by the cultural struggles over Indian languages in South Africa, discussed at length in Chapter Five. As already argued, the struggle over Indian language is a key cultural domain, in which the economic and political issues are contested. As is clear from the radio debates discussed above, identifications with Indian languages in Durban have also become identifications with particular Indian geographies, despite Dr. Veeran's hope that this would not be the case – that identification with, say, the Tamil language would not necessarily involve identification with a particular part of India. Dr. Veeran hoped that languages could be viewed differently, divorced from their geographical place of origin and thus empty of political content: "Tamil is a language, it's like saying I am Yiddish as opposed to saying I am Jewish" (Interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, 3 November 2000). However through global cultural and political mobilizations of various kinds, regional factionalism has been exacerbated and such identifications are common.

Currently there are various attempts by cultural mediators to encourage the learning of the respective eastern languages. As Mr Ram Maharaj maintains:

> "There is resurgence in people trying to learn Hindi. Parents nowadays
> encourage their kids to attend classes. I have also noticed the similar
> behaviour amongst the Tamil-speaking community. This is a good sign,
> since our world is becoming increasingly westernized. Our kids need to
> know where they belong." (Interview with Mr Ram Maharaj, 30 October
> 2000).

6.5.4 Celebrating Diwali

The celebration of Diwali, a religious celebration in the Indian Hindu community is also indicative of the fragmentation of the community. There is dispute

amongst South African Indians on which day Tamil and Telegu-speaking and Hindi-speaking Hindus should celebrate Diwali. However there has been a general agreement for some years now that Hindus in India and in South Africa should celebrate Diwali on the same day. The following is an excerpt of a conflict that occurred in a work place environment regarding which day Hindus from the different linguistic groups celebrate Diwali.

In an e-mail to employees (the identity of the organization has been kept confidential); the head of the Human Resources Department submitted the following response to petitions from employees which encapsulates the struggle:

> "This is a note to all Tamil Hindu employees concerned about the … position on the date of Diwali this year. The … position agreed in respect of Diwali falling on Saturday was done after consultation with an authority that we understand speaks for all Hindus … We are fully aware that historically Tamils have celebrated the day before, but for some years now Hindu employees in India, South Africa have celebrated Diwali on one day and not two, and the reason for the claim this year that Tamil's need to celebrate a day before other Hindu's is not clear, notwithstanding the fact that it is well understood why historically there was a difference in the days on which Diwali was celebrated in North and South India.
>
> Following submissions by some Tamil employees and their religious representatives that the 24th is the date on which Tamils will celebrate, I will be available for a meeting with one Tamil representative per division …to discuss whether there is a need to develop a revised Diwali policy."
> (20 November 2003, Organisation Confidential)

There is an explicit indication in the e-mail that for some time South African Indians together with Hindu employees in India celebrate Diwali on one day. Quite clearly there has been a change of direction now with Tamil, Telegu and Hindi-speaking South Africans (or at least people identifying with these language groups) expressing a desire to celebrate on two different days.

After the meeting held with the relevant individuals, the Human Resources Department responded with the following e-mail to its employees:

> "Further to the debate that has taken place on the official date for the celebration of Diwali this year, it has been agreed with the representatives

of the Tamil and Telegu employees in ... that, as the Tamil Federation has advised that Tamils should celebrate on Friday the 24th as opposed to on Saturday (as will Indians of North Indian origin as advised by the Hindu Maha Sabha), the normal ... Diwali policy will apply, to Tamil and Telegu Hindu employees only, on Friday the 24th this year.

The Tamil employee representatives who attended the meeting were of the view that the date issued by the Tamil Federation should be the date applied in respect of Tamils and Telegus in the future.

For those of you unaffected by the matter but who have followed the debate, it may be helpful to understand that the date is determined by certain planetary alignments that change from year to year, and when these alignments mean that the "day" starts and ends in a 24 hour period that actually spans two calendar days this will mean that Tamils and Telegus will celebrate the day before North Indians as Rama started his journey in the South and ended it in the North." (21 November 2003, Organisation Confidential)

Thus the organization revised its Diwali policy and accommodated the wishes of its employees to celebrate on two days. Interestingly Indians in India are satisfied to celebrate on one day, but diaporic Indians (South African Indians included), display a greater linguistic diasporic consciousness.

One respondent, who preferred that his identity be kept confidential, expressed concern over the need to celebrate over two days. In his view, "We live in South Africa and not India, why do we need to celebrate on two days, when we all live in one place?" This heightened sense of diasporic linguistic consciousness has also manifested itself in identification with particular global religious groupings. The following sections consider these and also their globalized mechanisms of spread, in particular the impact of the Internet, a powerful new vehicle for creating "imagined" communities.

6.5.4 Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is a Hindu movement that has spread its base to South Africa. In 2001, I attended one of their launch meetings in Phoenix, Durban. It was clear that support for India was paramount as instead of raising the

South African flag, they raised the Indian flag instead. There are divergent views on the nature of such an organisation in South Africa and the possible impacts thereof on the South African Indian community. The VHP is clearly indicative of the greater diasporic consciousness of the South African Indian community as demonstrated by the links to global organisations such as the VHP and the establishment of satellite organisations here in South Africa.

An Internet search indicated that VHP is a worldwide organisation that has gained currency in various Indian diasporic communities (See Appendix E for fuller list of VHP sites worldwide). The site located at www.vhp.org is the central website for the VHP with a sub-menu for "Overseas" which contains lists of VHP organisations throughout the diasporic communities. For example the VHP internet site for America has the logo "Hindus Unite" displayed quite boldly on the website. (See Appendix E for screenshot) A search for a VHP internet site based in South Africa proved to be futile. However the VHP does run a local newspaper called the *Vishwa Shakti*, which makes clear that it is a "Hindu Newspaper" that carries issues mainly for the Hindi-speaking community.

Various media suggest that the Hindu community is fragmented as illustrated in the various electronic and radio programmes aimed explicitly at different linguistic audiences. There is deep concern about the effect of growing identifications by South Africans with distant political struggles. Prof. Brij Maharaj, a practicing Hindu, has engaged vociferously in these debates and argued against the formation of a partisan identity such as that promoted by the VHP. The following is one of his letters to the editor of *Post*:

Box 18 "I have worked with Hindu organisations for 25 years" (*Post*, 2-5 September 2000)	
Mr P Kishore questioned my contribution to Hinduism (*Post*, August 16). At the risk of being accused of blowing my own trumpet I am forced to respond. At the outset I want to assure Mr Kishore that while I am a South African Hindu I have never	Thackeray, leader of the Shiv Sena argues that democracy was not a suitable system for India and he favoured a system of "benign dictatorship". The RSS itself does not have a system of internal elections and commands of

claimed to be a scholar of Hinduism. However, as an academic researcher any issue I write about is always thoroughly investigated. Also since Mr Kishore has emphasised the importance of the facts, I wish to point out that I have never written to *Post* about the VHP. However, his letter provides me with an ideal opportunity to do so.

My contribution to Hinduism in SA is through the local and national organisations I have worked with for the past 25 years. These organisations include the Merebank Sanathan Dharma Woonathee Sabha, Sanathan Dharma Sabha of SA and the SA Hindu Maha Sabha. These are democratic organisations, rooted in and sensitive to, South African social, political and historical contexts. The highlight of my contribution would be being part of the negotiating team which ensured that Hinduism would be a recognised religion in the constitution of the new South Africa. As a result of our representations similar recognition was accorded to the vernaculars.

In contrast to South African Hindu organisations the VHP/RSS/HSS/Shiv Sena (Sangh Parivar) alliance promotes a right-wing, reactionary religion rooted in the Indian context. The presence of the VHP alliance in SA is unlikely to promote Hinduism because:

1. The RSS/VHP was significantly influenced by the Nazi movement as emphasised by MS Golwalker: "To keep up the purity of the race and its culture Germany shocked the world by purging of the country of the Semitic races - the Jews. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by."

2. The VHP and its allies are inherently undemocratic organisations with dictatorial tendencies. For example, Bal its supreme leader (Sarsanghchalak) are obeyed unquestioningly. In November 1929 the RSS opposed the "cumbersome clap-trap of internal democracy and opted for a centralised authority-based structure Ek Chalak Anuvarititva (following one leader)". In Nazi Germany this was called the "Fuehrer Principle".

3. A recent report by the Asian Human Rights Commission (September 1999), chaired by the respected Bombay High Court Judge, Justice H Suresh revealed that the VHP and its allies "still consider birth in any caste as sole determining factor of social status" and the "transformation of a tribal or a dalit into a life of the an anathema" to their philosophy.

4. According to Professor Partha Banerjee "traditionally conservative but apolitical Hindu temples in the USA and Europe are targeted by the Sangh in order to mobilise second-generation Indian-American youth through the organisation of VHP-sponsored Hindu summer camps and various religious conventions. Under the guise of cultural education a whole generation is being indoctrinated to be blind separatists and bigots." Mr Kishore should question why his children are being trained in the art of fighting at such camps.

5. The role of alliance in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is well-known. The view that fanatic Nathuram Godse resigned from the RSS before committing the deed is untenable as between 1925 and 1948 the Sangh did not have a membership list.

The question that progressive SA Hindus have to ask is how can the VHP alliance with its record for fermenting ethnic and communal violence, and its reactionary right-wing dictatorial and anti-democratic tendencies contribute to healing, reconciliation and reconstruction in our country. Indians may well support the VHP alliance. South Africans cannot afford to do so. (Brij Maharaj, Reservoir Hills)

Professor Brij Maharj is outspoken in his response to the establishment of the VHP in South Africa, articulating that "Indians may support the VHP but South Africans cannot afford to do so". Implicit in this suggestion is that patriotic South African Indians will not support VHP because of its politically unacceptable ideologies. The press has also carried numerous articles on the establishment of the VHP in South Africa, which capture the responses to its establishment. Some of the articles perused carried the following titles:

- "We can only reap a harvest of bitterness" (*Post*, 5 May 2000, Satish Jaggernath on Flipside).

- "Let's get it straight, the VHP is bad news" (*Post*, 13-16 September 2000, S. Jaggernath)

On the other hand support for the organization can be ascertained in the following captions:

- "Hindus must unite and not destroy each other" (*Post*, 27-30 September 2000, Pundit M Maharaj)

- "VHP and RSS are worthy organizations" (*Post*, 18 October 2000, N Rajbansi)

- "Hindu body works for understanding and harmony" (*Herald*, 30 July 2000, Mr Ram Maharaj, Public Relations Officer of VHP)

In an interview with Mr Kamal Maharaj, the National Secretary of the VHP, Mr Maharaj said that the VHP arose out of the need to protect Hindu interests. One of the key threats to Hinduism in his view has been the widespread conversion of Hindus to Christianity:

> **Aline**: "Out of what context did that arise? I mean why would they need to unite Hindus - were they under threat?"
>
> **Mr Kamal Maharaj**: "I wouldn't say that the Hindus are under threat. The VHP didn't arise out of being reaction to anything, it was a need to build Hindu Organisations, VHP being the mother organisation, to try and help the other regional and national organisations, to galvanise their potential, to work as a unit. And also of course to be able to protect Hindus worldwide. It is common knowledge, especially missionary work, they target Hindus a lot. The main reason being they think Hindus are a disunited weak lot and they have instructions from various people from their hierarchy to - you know - to reap the harvest as such, as though Hindus were crops, you know harvest them, that type of attitude that we feel is incorrect racism, and any form of racism Hindus will fight against. It doesn't mean that physically, but intellectually and morally, like we fought against apartheid in South Africa, we will fight against any form of racism throughout the world.
>
> But of course that is not the only aspect, it is also social programmes that we have such as SEWA consisting of Service Projects throughout the world, schools, clinics, educational institutions of course regarding tertiary

aspects. Then of course focusing on Hindu aspects as well, like improving the quality of priests educating them on Hindu aspects, bringing about change regarding certain misunderstood social aspects of Hinduism, conscientising Hindus about their role and teaching Hindus to work with the community within which they live in, so to live in harmony. Our concept is built on Vedic principles of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' which means that the 'whole world is one family.' And we believe in 'unity in diversity' very strongly. People must be allowed to grow, there shouldn't be any form of indoctrination, any lies, underhanded way of - you know, putting people into corners and subjugating them to what we call 'psychological violence', perpetuated by certain over-enthusiastic people from various faiths who believe that the whole world must become what they believe.

We don't think that the world is a place for that; the world should be a place for peace, for everybody, for all of us to share and learn. From time immemorial this has been happening where cultures have been destroyed, their what they call 'smash-bang and grab' theory, they smash into people's culture, bang into the ground and grab what they can. You have people doing that, I mean it's pretty obvious, history has proven that. You find that if you go to certain countries like America the Red Indians' culture is gone, their traditions, I mean why should that happen? Who says that any particular person has a better form of culture? Even in Africa, look at what they have done. They have taken away and made the African into something else; they have raped them of their culture that is what they have done.' (Interview Mr Kamal Maharaj, 4 December 2001)

Mr Maharaj explains that the VHP was established to protect "...Hindus under threat", similar to GOPIO which was established to protect the Indian diaspora. VHP is seen as the "mother organisation" protecting the vulnerable, "...Hindus are a disunited weak lot". He goes onto describe how Africans were 'raped' of their indigenous culture. Such textual features highlight the passionate nature of the revival of Hinduism and its links to the VHP.

An attempt is clearly being made to create in South Africa an "imagined Hindi-speaking community" that has explicit geographic ties to India. The politics of the VHP indicate links to the BJP politics of the Indian subcontinent, as explicated by various cultural leaders. In South Africa, during the period under review, various attempts were made in the public sphere to prevent the VHP from

establishing itself among Hindus. For example, Prof. Brij Maharaj's letter of warning attracted strong support:

Box 19: "Our own superstitions and disunity make us easy prey to other faiths"
(Letter to the Editor, "Quadriplegics", Chatsworth,
Post, 6-9 September 2000)

We support the excellent anti-VHP letter of Mr Brij Maharaj, *Post*, and August 30. Such enlightened letters are necessary, especially because the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's South African public relations officer Mr Ram Maharaj is spreading pro-VHP propaganda in your sister newspaper's columns in an absurdly pretentious letter (*Herald*, July 30). Worse still, his substance amounts to poisonous propaganda for the VHP, the RSS and the BJP which are a constellation of fanatical organisations headquartered in India. They are spreading their dangerous tentacles abroad. Therefore their zealotry must be countered. Ideas have legs. The BJP's Chief Minister of a major Indian state - no one less - recently was quoted prominently in the prestigious magazine *India Today* as saying that we must practice the caste system to preserve Hindu society.	The pernicious caste system is a bane, not a blessing. A top and long-standing RSS member, Madan Lan Khurana, who was a cabinet minister in the BJP-led coalition government in India, resigned in disgust last year pursuant to the on-going violence against and persecution of religious minorities, especially Christians, and the conniving exultation of the VHP-RSS-BJP combined, that religious conversions must be stopped at any price. One Christian missionary and his children were burnt alive ... The VHP-RSS-BJP coterie egged Hindu fanatics into destroying the mosque at Ayodhya almost a decade ago. Such partnership damages the otherwise fair name of Hinduism. The BJP and its reactionary sister organisation are steeped in the vices of intolerance and communalism. We can be assertive Hindus and yet stand for inter-religious fellowship.

It is the contention of this dissertation that the existence of the VHP in South Africa is illustrative of the efforts of cultural leaders attempting to create a particular Hindi imagined community in South Africa, thus suggesting that South African Indians may espouse a greater diasporic consciousness rather than a purely South African identity. Does this particular brand of imagined community then destabilize the patriotism of Indians in South Africa? Whatever the answer to this question, the global geography of the VHP is perpetuated through technologies like the Internet, and despite the protests it appears to be gaining a foothold in South Africa.

6.5.5 Sri Lanka

Another imagined community demonstrating fragmenting geographical identifications with India, is being created among Tamils in South Africa. Earlier on in this discussion, it was demonstrated that the South African Indian community is fragmented along linguistic lines. This section demonstrates that in

addition to internal differentiation these distinctive identities are now uniting on a wider geographic space. This is illustrated by the VHP and also by attempts within the Tamil-speaking community to draw links with Sri Lanka. In June 2003 a "Tamil Festival" was held at Shree Emperumal Temple Grounds in Mount Edgecombe. According to Bala Naidoo, president of the Natal Tamil Federation, "We are on our way to achieving our aims to unite our Tamil brothers and sisters under one banner" (*Post*, 18-20 June 2003). Clearly as expressed by Mr Bala Naidoo there is a move to unite the Tamil-speaking South African Indian population.

Earlier, in 2001, the Eighth International Conference on Tamil language and legacy was held for the first time in Durban. The conference was a joint initiative of the International Movement of Tamil Culture and the South African Tamil Federation. South Africa Tamil Federation members Mr Mickey Chetty, said that the primary goal of the conference was to build unity among Tamil speakers: "We want to remain united and rejuvenate ourselves as an international community." (*Post*, 19-21 December 2001)

The conference chief executive Mr Nagalingam Moodley remarked further on the goals of the Conference, making explicit the move to link South African Tamils to the wider Tamil global community:

> "Among the goals are to promote a Tamil renaissance, launch an ambitious drive to network 100 million Tamils and seek a peaceful settlement to the bitter civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), all ahead of the next conference in Germany in 2004. The Tamil community in South Africa, India and many parts of the world face a challenge of achieving these goals before we gather in Europe in three years time. The way forward is to launch a Tamil renaissance and within this social framework we hope to achieve our goals in religion, arts, culture and heritage.' (*Post*, 19-21 December 2001)

In an interview with Mr Padminathon, the Director of the International Centre of Performing Arts and President of 'The Tamil Eelam Committee – South Africa', a year prior to the conference, he added the conference would propose the adoption

of a national anthem for the Tamil·community, as well as design a global Tamil Flag. Such cultural symbols certainly point to the growing consolidation of a Tamil community, in which South African Tamils are intended to play an important role. In addition local Tamil youth would visit Tamilians in Canada to learn about the use of language in their lives in an effort to revive Tamil in the South African Indian community. This is also expressed in the fight the Tamil language as discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis:

> **Mr Padminathon**: "South Africa has the largest Indian population in the world, apart from Sri Lanka, and between 60 to 75 per cent were originally Tamil speaking ... Tamil is the oldest spoken language in the world. We need it for our inner soul. That's more important than bread and butter ..." (Interview with Mr Padminathon, 30 October 2000)

Mr Padminathon maintained that what is needed is a strong call to Tamil communities worldwide to "unite in an attempt to be recognised as a strong economic and political force" (Interview with Mr Padminathon, 30 October 2000).

He also added that there was no conflict between a Tamil identity and a South African identity: "Local Tamil youth face a number of challenges brought about by living in a multicultural society, but do not face an identity crisis through the concept of dual allegiances to a motherland (India) and fatherland (South Africa)." (Interview with Mr Padminathon, (30 October 2000). The use of metaphors is interesting here: "motherland" is used to describe India and "fatherland" South Africa. In the traditional sense of the term, "mother" is assumed to provide comfort and "father" security, mainly economic. The distinction is clear, that India is a source of comfort and in this case, the source of spiritual comfort and South Africa is a source of economic livelihood.

While this search for authenticity amongst South African Tamilians continues, an attempted link is also being made with the politics of Sri Lanka. In an interview with Mr Satish Jaggernath on the nature of the involvement he articulated the following response:

Aline: "What do you think about the Tamil Eelam Committee?"

Mr Satish Jaggernath: "I actually helped them prepare the memoranda that they delivered at the ... Non-Aligned Conference that was held sometime last year, their grievances are legitimate in the sense that the oppression of the Tamil community is very strong in Sri Lanka and the violation of their human rights have to be redressed. So it's not a problem ... except when perhaps it resorts to a call to arms, it's not fair to ask Tamils in South Africa to volunteer to take up arms in a another country's struggle. It's a matter of opinion. Some people say they are not involved. I would say that the community here has every right to support the programmes of the Tamils there, but it must also realise that sovereign wise they are South African and it shouldn't really create that type of feeling that it could actually go and take up arms because of the situation."

Aline: "Why should we support them ... what the Tamils are doing?"

Mr Satish Jaggernath: "Okay you see this is where ... ethnic consciousness can be dangerous, in that there is nothing wrong in supporting them because you have a certain commonality. The biggest one is that your language identity is the same right. But when you get caught up in that then you are recognising people in terms of that type of identity, no. Why wouldn't, say, the person who is Indian want to go and help ... India with what is happening in the rest of Africa, where there are major ethnic conflicts? The reason is you are saying they are not of our kind. So even humanitarian aid is not supported by everybody. So what you are doing is that in a situation when you are falling back on your commonality, on the basis of language, you are set in your ethnicity and the problem with that is that it is contradictory in that you are not seeing yourself as a human being who should be responding to problems. You obviously cannot respond to everybody's problems, but you are not seeing yourself as a sort of human being first, you are seeing yourself as a person with a certain type of identity and I think that counts. I am not saying no help must be given, certainly help must be given, but there are limits to the help." (Interview with Mr Satish Jaggernath, 18 November 2000)

Mr Satish Jaggernath does appear to feel that there might be a danger in South African Indians showing support to Sri Lankans, as it calls into question South African Tamil's patriotism to South Africa.

These were crucial questions that the community engaged with in the public sphere during the period under review. Some of the captions in local newspapers

capture the attempts to create dialogic links between South African Tamils and a global Tamil community:

- "Tamil Tiger Probe in SA", (*Mail and Guardian*, 27 October 1997)
- "Sri Lanka should learn from the southern African experience."(*Tribune Herald*, 21 November 1999)
- "Tamils of the world gather in Durban" (*Sunday Times*, 16 December 2001)
- "Tamils Awaken" (*Sunday Times*, 7 April 2002)

The *Tamil Guardian* newspaper is published in South Africa as *Voice of the Tamil People* (See Appendix E), perhaps implying that the South African Tamils do not currently have a voice.[63] This newspaper contains news about Tamils worldwide, with a particular focus on the South African Tamil community. A search of the relevant Tamil internet sites revealed that a global "Tamil cybercommunity" is growing as indicated in the Appendix. Lal (1994) has written extensively about the Internet creating a Hindu "cybercommunity", and the Tamil global community is clearly doing the same.

As the community has strengthened its links with the global Tamil community, there were concerns that the Tamil Eelam Movement would set up in South Africa. The Tamil Eelam Movement is a rebel movement in Sri Lanka, which has been staging a separatist rebellion in Sri Lanka for the past 14 years. As early as 1997, President Mandela promised Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunga that he would personally investigate claims that funds were flowing from South Africa to the rebel group. The Tamil Federation of Gauteng confirmed that some of its members have donated money to the Tamil Tigers (*Mail and Guardian*, 27 October 1997).

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63 In addition the Tamil Guardian is a subsidiary of a global Tamil newspaper, the Tamil Guardian International

South African Tamils refute claims that there is a Tamil Eelam Movement in South Africa; however there is a "Tamil Co-ordinating Committee", which is deeply sympathetic to the killings in Sri Lanka. At a meeting or cultural event in late November 2000 in which I was invited to attend, the traces of Sri Lanka were evident. Graphic photographs of the violence adorned the walls and the speakers made explicit reference to "wanton killings" in Sri Lanka in an effort to garner support.

The attachment to Sri Lanka was also evident when a cricket match was to be held between Sri Lanka and South Africa in Chatsworth in 1999. There were divergent responses to the cricket match being held. Mr Kisten Chinappah of the Tamil Eelam Support Movement in South Africa said:

> "...the cricket match between South Africa and Sri Lanka ... the tour must be stopped. We cannot allow South Africans to play sport against teams whose government is killing thousands of people, whose soldiers are raping Tamil women and girls." (*Post*, 4 November 1999).

Many South African Tamil declared their support for Sri Lanka in the local press, as for example in the following letter:

> "... The game should be called off. Our brothers and sisters are being killed in Sri Lanka. It is morally wrong to entertain our persecutors on our doorstep. In fact, I think that it is downright arrogant of the NCU to fixture this match in Chatsworth. Witnessing one game is not going to work miracles and turn our youngsters into sporting stars. The players who will be gracing the pitch are not even role models to justify the cricket union's claim that they will inspire the youth of Chatsworth. The community of Chatsworth has a duty as human beings to lodge a protest against this game. I am prepared to join the protest even though I am not a member of the Tamil Eelam Support Movement." (Mrs Shireen Govender, Chatsworth, *Post*, 10-13 November 1999)

Support for Sri Lanka is clearly indicated by Mrs Govender referring to the Sri Lankans as her "brothers and sisters".

Some readers felt that the lack of support of South Africans for the Tamil Tigers was irresponsible. The following letter to the Editor encapsulated this view

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Box 20:"Leaders should act on the Sri Lankan killings"

Letter to Editor, *Post*, 2-5 December 1998

As the most loved and respected statesmen internationally, our magical Madiba was the ideal diplomat to have intervened in the civil wars/political crises in Nigeria, Angola, Rwanda, Lesotho, Congo, East Timor, and Northern Ireland.

In view of the foregoing facts South Africa's refusal to intervene in the ethnic cleansing going on in north and east Sri Lanka is astounding, contradictory and indefensible.

Of course, South Africa has a massive and lucrative trade relationship, and our Madiba enjoys a very friendly relationship with the charming and vivacious President Chandriak Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka.

At the moment various factual, comprehensive and horrifying video films - produced by independent, reputable and foreign media-people (and definitely not by Tamil Tiger propagandists) - laying bare Sri Lankan genocide, torture, brutality, rape, maiming, and slaughter are circulating in South Africa. Men may lie but cameras cannot! More than 60 000 Tamil civilians (not guerrillas) have been slain in Chandrika's "democratic" Sri Lanka.

The leaders of the ANC, IFP, UDM, NP, DP, MF, etc should view the video films on Sri Lankan terrorism and act soon - diplomatically (and not militarily as in the Lesotho fiasco).

CM Perumal

Mr Perumal questions the leadership as to their lack of support to Sri Lanka. He argues that South African leaders have provided support to the African conflicts, why not Sri Lankan, since here too human rights abuses are involved.

Others questioned the possible allegiance to Sri Lanka. One reader stated in response to the proposed cricket match in South Africa:

> "As part of South Africa's previously oppressed mass, we have had a long and hard struggle to achieve freedom, and we need to first redress the imbalance on our doorstep before we look for the next worthy cause. At present we have an all-white cricket team and an all-black (African) soccer team, except for the tinge of colour that they have in the form of a few players. Indian sportsmen have been on the sideline for too long and we need to ensure that future generations of Indians stand just as good a chance of national selection in all codes of sport as fellow South Africans belonging to other race groups. Our youngsters need the exposure and inspiration that these international matches could provide. I sympathise with the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Eelam Support Movement, but I think that we need to look at uplifting ourselves first. How can we boycott our own progress?" (Mr Moghamberry Govender, 71, Chatsworth, *Post*, 10-13 November 1999)

Mr Govender articulates strongly that South Africans with Tamil affiliations should concentrate on South African Indians here rather than developing a relationship with the Tamil global community: "we need to first address the imbalance on our doorstep." The Chatsworth cricket team needs exposure he

argues, especially since there is a lack of Indian sportsmen in the national cricket team.

In an interview with Dr Naresh Veeran the latter articulated his concern that, while the sympathy that South African Tamils feel towards people in Sri Lanka might be understandable, the consequences if the situation in Sri Lanka requires more than sympathy could be serious:

> **Aline**: "The Tamil Ealam Committee, do you have anything to say about them?"

> **Dr Naresh Veeran**: 'Ya I told them to go to hell, any group that is linked to violence I will not talk to them, I don't even engage in discussions with them because that's not right … killing people in the name of God, the name of language, in the name of religion or whatever aim you want to. I will not support them in any form, no matter how it's filtered down in South Africa, no matter how honourable or noble it comes down here, killing people is wrong and I will not support it and the station will not support it, as long as I am here, we will not support it." (Interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, 3 November 2000)

Overall, however, the construction of a global Tamil community is certainly gaining currency within the broader negotiation of identities. These constructions of linguistic identities and their links to the wider Indian Tamil diapora demonstrate the formation of a global Tamil community, and efforts to create an ethnically identified group amongst South African Tamil speakers are gaining ground.

6.7 Conclusion

Contemporary cultural geography employs a dynamic notion of culture as "… a domain in which economic and political contradictions are contested and resolved … meanings are negotiated and relations of dominance and subordination are defined and contested." (Jackson, 1989:1) Chetty (1992) proposes that the names given to Indian-ness in South Africa reflect the historical structures of colonial order and power. For instance the name "coolie" reflected the processes of colonialism. During colonialism, Indian-ness was described as the "Asiatic menace" and metaphors of contamination and pollution occupied the imaginations

of the colonialists (Scott, 1994). In the 1930s Indian-ness was described as "unassimilable".

Indian-ness was again an issue in Gandhi's political project: by the 1940s the representations of Indian-ness had changed in the public sphere. Indian-ness was reconstructed as an oppositional mode which was tied to the satyagraha (passive resistance) movement and a greater diasporic consciousness. Here the motherland became a potent symbol for an essential Indian-ness invoked by the Gandhian mystique. "Blackness" in the 1970s was the new politics of identity and South African Indians identified with being black. The discourse of Indian-ness during this period was subsumed into the Black Consciousness movement. However in the 1980s a renewed interest in Indian-ness demonstrated itself in the tricameral experiment. In the 1990s to the current period, there seems to be a return to the ethnic mode in politics and Indian-ness has become a necessary political tool, as exemplified in the search for an authentic Indian-ness.

Of course, as cultural theorists point out, the search by diasporic Indians for an authentic Indian meaning is inherently futile. For in deconstructing the notion of Indian and Indian-ness, identities are contingent, often multiple and evolving. This chapter, then, has explored the way in which (sometimes conflicting) local and global identifications are continuing to shape changing ideas about being a South African Indian in post-apartheid Durban.

On the one hand, it is possible to distinguish a defensive identity, a response to feelings of being under threat in the New South Africa. In this case South African Indians have chosen to politicise their culture at a local level in order to be considered as a valid "interest group" in South African society. By strategically essentialising their Indian-ness, they are placing their concerns in the public sphere. This politics is in the main, constructed and played around an array of racial categorisations based on biological and cultural essentialism. The search

for the ever more authentic and more real Indian appears to be a perennial concern. Diasporic identifications and identifications with political or religious struggles in India, are heightened as a result of this new sense of threat. Yet the construction of an imagined community is a dangerous strategy as it promotes "othering" and may result in the community being objectified in turn.

The representation of South African Indians as a homogenous community is clearly discontinuous with the fragmenting identifications that many South African Indians are increasingly making. This chapter suggests that in the new South African socio-political environment, cultural contestation, the end of international isolation and the impact of global technologies such as the Internet, has led to attempts to draw Indian South Africans into particular imagined communities, such as the "global Indian diasporic community", "Hindi diasporic community" and "Tamil diasporic community". The element of commonality between the three communities is their search for what they perceive as an authentic Indian-ness. The imagined communities discussed in this chapter privilege essentialism and communal hegemony. (The other response - the rejection of an Indian identity - is discussed in the next chapter). South African Indians are creating a new imagined community through the maintenance and cultural reproduction of "old" communities.

Finally the historical and contemporary situation in South Africa indicates that South African Indians have been ineluctably racialised. Through a historical legacy of being categorized as Indian, they have constantly been categorized as Indian during the pre, apartheid and post-apartheid eras. On the other hand despite the radical objectives of the progressive strategy that the post-apartheid era has signalled and created, it is proving to be politically problematic for Indians to claim African-ness in Durban, since the history of apartheid and the structural position of African requires that the distinction between African and other racial identities be maintained.

On the other hand many South African Indians are laying claim to an African identity, eschewing any Indian-ness. While there is a search for an authentic Indian-ness the analysis has suggested there are competing discourses that point to the disruption of the authentic Indian. The analysis suggests that Indian-ness is a hybrid identification (See Chapter Seven).

Chapter Seven

Disrupting the "Authentic" Indian:

Counter-Essentialist and Hybrid Discourses

of Indian-ness

> **Professor Fatima Meer**: "I am an Indian and a South
> African, and an African, these are all my identities and I
> subscribe to all these identities." (Interview with Professor
> Fatima Meer, 23 November 2000)

7.1   Introduction

The two poems by Ronnie Govender and Sejal, presented in Box 20, provide the
point of departure for this chapter, as they are two poets whose roots lie in the
subcontinent but their sense of belonging transcends geography. Both poems are
written by Indian authors of different "nationalities". Ronnie Govender, a South
African Indian and anti-apartheid activist, identifies himself as an African.
Govender explores his personal identity through the poem and we see traces of his
antagonisms, his identifications with the anti-apartheid struggle and his constant
searching for selfhood. His poem, while reflecting his quest for personal
identification, also throws light on the broader Indian community's struggle with
identity issues. The poem culminates in his identification with Africa,
disallowing any identification with India. While mentioning the Indian heroes of
the anti-apartheid struggle, Indians as a racial group are not given any

prominence; they are afforded the same prominence as the other racial groups in the anti-apartheid struggle.

Box 21: Who am I?	
Who am I? By Ronnie Govender, (own emphasis added)	**Who am I?** By Sejal, Majithis, UK, (www.nriol.com/content/poems/poem16.html.)
I have been called Indian Asiatic South African Indian Indian South African Coolie Amakula Char ou Amandiya Who am I? I am Like my father and my mother and their fathers and mothers A cane-cutter, housewife, mendicant, market- gardener, shit-bucket carrier, factory worker, mid-wife, freedom fighter, trade unionist, builder of schools, Of orphanages, nurse, writer, poet Embraced by the spirit Of Cato Manor Surging with the spirit Of Lumumba and Luthuli Of Ricky Turner, of Lenny Naidoo Of Andrew Zondo, of Ashley Kriel, Timol and Haffeejee Of Victoria and Griffiths Mxenge Whose assassins Lurk in the shadows Their voices still spreading the venom of race hate Of internecine strife And who seek to deny me What is mine, give me By Dadoo, Naicker, Velliamma and Mandela Given me through the lions of baker's vanman Dorasamy Through the womb of house-wife Chellamma On 16th May 1934 in Cato Manor They will not displace me For I know who I am **I am an African**	So many times I try and answer the question that so often people ask of me 'Who are you and where do you really come from?' The latter is easy to answer I guess it's a matter of time and geography I tell them I was born in a country that my parents could only describe as 'paradise on earth', Until the ideology of one crazy man came to destroy our very own Eden with his rhetoric ... 'Uganda is for Africans ... black Africans' ... which forced my family to flee But my ancestry and childhood years goes beyond the Dark Continent and what the west knows as the cradle of civilization to a place on earth where once the gods walked The history, the culture the language and the country are as old as the Vedic scriptures A place that is so overwhelming that to try and describe it in English you could never do it justice Mother India the world's largest democracy, a democracy fought so hard in blood and tears by my ancestors against the might of the British Raj in the hope that we would live free The Raj, the jewel in the crown of the might British Empire ironically was no jewel for my parents who wanted us to be educated the British way, so that we could acquire KNOWLEDGE, the one thing no Empire, or Dictator could ever take away Knowledge of a better life, and so to a better life we came. To England a place I call home. But people say 'Home is where the heart is' And that's when I question the former ... Who am I really? Physically my heart is here in London the so-called capital of the world Mentally and emotionally I'm not so sure I long to return to Africa and India to my countries of origin and try to understand how it is these two places have come to shape the **person who people call SEJAL.**

Sejal, on the other hand is a recent Indian immigrant to London. His roots are in Uganda and in India. He explores the impact of these three different places on his

identity and states that he is Sejal, thus asserting his own personal identity. What the two poems show is the interplay of globalisation and place-making that shapes identity formations. While the purpose of this chapter is not to directly examine the dynamics of globalisation and localization on the formation of identities (this was the subject of the previous chapter), the negotiation of identities does occur within this terrain.

In South Africa the National Party created the four race classifications to secure their government. Such classifications are thus embedded in the racism of the Nationalist invention, which used race (and perhaps culture) for political purposes. Counter-essentialist discourses in South Africa, then, were largely created in response to the state-imposed identity. These counter-essentialist discourses also reverberate throughout the Indian diaspora, with for example Asians in Britain adopting a Black identity, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the counter-essentialist cultural identity constructions of South African Indians expressed in the public sphere during the period under review. There are various strands of counter-discourses that were identified in the interviews and media analysis. The four main ones are:

- I am an African;
- We are the poor;
- We are South African; and
- Hybrid Playfulness/Global Consumerism.

These discourses occur within a continuum of counter-essentialist discourses, each displaying gradations of counter-essentialist Indian-ness. In addition to exploring the counter discourses to assertions of essentialist Indian identity, a case study of South African Indian voting patterns will be explored to reveal the tensions that have been made explicit in the investigation.

7.2 "An Indian is a Meaningless Concept": General Comments on Counter-Essentialist Discourses

"... I think that one has to be comfortable with the notion that one has one's own cultural identity and that one doesn't necessarily have to be at 'home', so to speak. But having had that cultural identity, to whatever else it is that is established for you, wherever you are rooted, whatever you are rooted in ... I think that we have to accept that we are going to be perpetually wondering. We are bound to, I think. That's the kind of crisis that we are in now, that we're forced to be in a state of perpetual wandering. I mean we can't be at home. Even if we sit at home, we are forced to travel, just because of what is going on around us." (Gupta, 1993: 5)

Gupta reminds us that the forces of globalization have resulted in societies perpetually wandering; we are never rooted but constantly searching. In this chapter the hybrid discourses identified, work to consciously disrupt the essentialist Indian-ness discourses. Their hybridity defies the neat borders of an Indian identity, by claiming that South African Indians have multivalent identities.

The respondents' responses suggest that they see themselves as South African-Indian, Indian-South African, IndoSafrican, or African. The hyphenated identity marks not only the inclusion/exclusion status of hyphenated Indian-ness but the shifting and dynamic movement between the two. There are multiple positionings evident here. These discourses also unpack some of the stereotypes, displaying the multiple layers of Indian identities. For instance in the television advertisements on South African television, Indian women are still depicted in sari and bindhi, however the discourses identified here provide potential to see the existence of hybrid identities that transgress the normative structures of Indian identity.

Box 22:
"False Divisions Fragment SA Indians"
***Sunday Tribune Herald*, 12 November 2003**

It's time for the Indian community to put aside the barriers of religion, language, caste and class that divide it and promote the compassion, sharing and honesty that will lead to communal harmony, by Ms Ela Gandhi.	which united the community, so that they were able to respond to problems of health care, education and welfare by establishing volunteer teams to assist the less fortunate, today it is becoming more and more difficult to mobilise the community around any issue.

Many of our forefathers arrived in South Africa 143 years ago. They were lured here with false promises of milk and honey by touts recruiting indentured labourers. They came here to find themselves in situations of virtual slavery. Some perished in the harsh conditions, some returned to where they came from, but a large number had sold everything they possessed and did not have anything to go back to, so they survived the five year contract and then tried to make an independent living using their particular skills. Others were in the care of benevolent masters and were able to survive within the sugar industry even to the next generation.

Today, while there are those who have been able to accumulate wealth over the years and enjoy and affluent lifestyle, there are thousands of people hidden from the limelight in distant suburbs and in little homes trying to survive.

This is not the image of the Indian people the general public knows. Often the pages of the print media, switch on the radio or watch TV programmes and you see, fashionable clothes, jewelry worth thousands of rands, exotic food costing hundreds of rands to produce affluent celebrations of festivals, dances and richly decorated places of worship.

The impression one gains is that this is the face of the Indian community in SA. The other side of the story is that nearly 30% of Indians are unemployed. Many are living in abject poverty, others are trying to survive in the best way they can by using their entrepreneurial skills. And others are trying desperately to maintain a middle-class lifestyle with both parents working and struggling to make ends meet.

This is the reality one is confronted with when visiting homes in Phoenix, Chatsworth, Verulam, Tongaat, Isipingo and other largely poorer "Indian" residential homes.

Whereas in the past there was a strong communal bond

The community is now becoming more and more polarised through competing religious, social and cultural interests. Those who do not belong to these groups remain alone and isolated.

There seems to be nothing to bind the community together across these barriers of religion, language, caste and class. Already a small community is now further fragmented by artificial divisions. It is no wonder that we are proclaimed a community without a leader.

In the past politics and civic issues united us. We were able to mobilise people across the divides and give rise to strong leadership such that of Dr Monty Naicker, MP Naicker, Harry Naidoo, Dasruth Bandhoo, Dr Chota Motala, Billy Nair, Dr Dadoo, Ahmed Kathrada and many others.

We are now also trying to find a place in a new democracy and to build a common nationhood as South Africans. But even this is not easy. South Africans have been conditioned by 300 years of apartheid racism. A new united society will take a long time to develop.

So what can we do about all of this?

Perhaps communities need to come together around common issues. At present it is the need to address the present social and cultural values which are eating at the very fabric of our society – the culture of consumerism, excessive competitiveness, materialism, crime and corruption, intolerance, violence, drink, drugs and gambling. Should we allow this to continue and to destroy us, or is it time that we begin to think of building a new culture?

Our survival requires us to begin to develop more compassion, sharing, honesty, unity, simplicity and communal harmony.

To further these principles we need the assistance of the public media …

Let us remember the ability, the will and the bravery of our forefathers and be inspired by them! Let us not marginalise ourselves.

In the article above written by Ms Ela Gandhi, the grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, she points to the stereotypes prevalent in the media that hide the 'poor' in the community. In addition to the poor, however, the media, also fails to picture those who defy the 'normative structures' of Indian-ness, for example the gay community, HIV/Aids sufferers etc. Although Gandhi points to the divisions in the community, she reminisces about earlier times where South African Indians were a closer and tight-knit community. While attempting to correct a false picture of Indians, one that she is intent on exposing, she ends up perpetuating some of the stereotypes.

The assertion that '...*an Indian is a meaningless concept*' (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000), sums up the various discourses that have been identified through an analysis of interview responses and media representations. Many of the respondents within these discourses argue that this Indian essence does not exist, it is a myth. Some reject the 'Indian' identity marker. They contest the "authentic", "essential" or "primordial" Indian identity, which the apartheid system was intent on perpetuating. This is evident in all the counter discourses to essentialist Indian-ness, which tend to cohere in agreeing that Indian-ness is basically meaningless, or at least unimportant.

The whole notion of Indian-ness is thus problematised. Dr. Ashwin Desai, for example, deconstructs the notion of an Indian-ness, suggesting that India is either deified or referred to in derogatory terms. He calls for a radical re-think of these identifications/myths:

> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "The two extremities, the bashing of India and the deifying of India - we had a columnist here who provided a list of things that only happened in India, such as they invented the number zero, up to they never had racism. What could end up is that we have all these kind of myths and how do you react to that being born from India, how do you react to those kind of extremities?" (Radio Lotus Talkhow, 3 July 1999)

Further Dr Adam Habib lightly suggests that the only thread for Indian-ness is "curry" - however Indians are not the only curry-eaters:

> **Dr Adam Habib**: "...Indians are not a common group sharing the same ideology. The only thing that Indians have in common is their olive-coloured skin, and even that cannot be a factor because if you went to Latin America, you would find people with the same skin colour. The community is divided along religious, linguistic, and class lines. Its members do not really see themselves as Indian, rather they regard themselves as Muslim, Hindi, Tamil and Telegu. What is this "Indian-ness" that people speak about? There is nothing peculiarly Indian, except maybe the fact that we are a group of curry-eaters. But there are other people in the South African community, who enjoy curry. Does that make them Indian?" (Interview with Dr Adam Habib, 3 November 2000)

Here Dr Adam Habib asks what is that about this community that makes them feel that they are Indian? If it is the fact that they are all the same colour, then they share the same characteristics as other "olive-coloured skin" people.

In a Radio Lotus Talkshow, entitled "Pure Chutney" and hosted by Dr. Ashwin Desai, a Professor Kumar analyzing the hybridity of Trinidadian culture had the following to say about South African Indian culture. He spoke in response to a caller, Karim:

> **Karim** (caller): "… Ashwin I would like to pose a question here. What is the link between the fact that Indians here, the Indians in India and the Pakistanis - you know we have somehow grown up and gone into total sort of Western culture and values? Look at India, what it is today, and when you go to India as a tourist what one needs to realise and also one has to see the movies that are coming out of India, they have certainly lost their Indian essence, Indian background. And I would like to ask him, is it possible that we are all drifting away because of the western norms and values that are actually devastating us, because of the onslaught of Western culture that is so pressing on us, indulging and taking on those values that are to some extent not very good on us? We seem to have lost our Indian identity to a point but maybe I am wrong."

> **Professor Kumar**: "… I am afraid I am going to have to disagree with you. I don't believe there's an Indian essence and the reason I do that is not because I am a Professor and use big words. I want to know what is the Indian essence that you are talking about. For example we heard on this radio that they are Indians because they pray everyday. Ashwin had questions and I also had questions, why did this friend think that he was Indian because he was linked in a traditional custom to a land that was faraway from here? I understand the point that he is connected to it, I understand the point that there is a history that binds him to it. Why is this person not saying that he is an Indian because there's an Indian of the name Yusuf Dadoo involved in a struggle here, or that there's an Indian today by the name Laloo Cheba who was tortured in prison and today is an important leader of the ANC? So I want to ask you and I really want to engage in a friendly dialogue here, which India are you talking about and which are the Indians that you would claim your allegiance to and why?" (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 3 July 1999)

In the excerpt, Professor Kumar contests the existence of an Indian essence while the caller insists that India has "lost" its essence. Moreover Professor Kumar asks, what is this essence that binds Indians together? South African Indians have

more in common with South Africa than any other country, therefore why are they not identifying with the anti-apartheid struggle and the activists? Yet this caller clearly identifies with India.

> **Professor Kumar**: "... I am glad that you represent and that you also evidence here, in terms of what you are saying about the Cheebas and Kathradas, that you represent the difference. And I am indeed very interested in saying that no one should have any particular claim to being the authentic representative of a peoples that are very diverse. I accept that. But I am not at all at that point really willing to accede the ground that I want *a more political sense of India affixed as a sense of timeless essence that doesn't carry the marks of history on it.* So my point with Karim was that the idea of India he holds dear, that he wants to carry with him, as he and others cross borders, that should not be an apolitical idea. That should be an idea of an India, that people have indeed suffered but also struggled. I do not want that to be dismissed ether in terms of a chant, in terms of a slogan, that's all." (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 3 July 1999)

Professor Kumar is making the point that the India that individuals attach themselves to is a fixed sense of India, free from the vagaries of time, indeed an idea that an essentially apolitical. Postcolonial literature (as discussed in the theoretical chapter) problematises the notions of fixed identities of "places" and thus "national identities".

Similarly in an interview with Professor Brij Maharaj I asked him whether he felt that there was a heightened sense of cultural identity among the Indian community. As noted in Chapter Five, he argued that there was and pointed to the markers of Indian culture, such as the wearing of traditional dress on campus, that suggest a heightened identification with India. (Interview with Professor Brij Maharaj, 15 November 2000). But need we see these markers as an identification with India, or merely a new dress form that has become popular in the West, with the movement called "Brownsploitation"? Clearly elements of the east have become popular and thus been "commodified" for the consumer. These popular social movements which became popular with Madonna and other public figures that were seen with Indian adornments have resulted in "Indian" being hip (See Chapter Two).

India's ex-consul general Mrs. Primrose Sharma said that she was aware that the Indian community in South Africa was intent on trying to maintain their Indian traditions, which they feared would be lost to future generations. However, she went on, "they don't realize that some of these traditions are in fact, stereotypes and come from a patriarchal system, which in India does not even exist anymore, except in the rural areas." (*Daily News*, 13 December 1999). Thus in India as Mrs. Sharma states, "Indians" do not subscribe to these traditions as fastidiously as South African Indians. Of course this adherence to cultural identity is not unique to South African Indians, Indians within the diaspora outside of India display similar behaviour, a fact well documented in theoretical literature.

Within the discourse of "Indian-ness" there are multi-layered responses. Each respondent contributes to another layer to the debate, and therefore it is not a polarized debate, that is between an Indian and a South African identity. Each individual respondent constructs his/her own identity through various intersections of race, class, religion and gender. There are multiple positionalities, as Dr Ashwin Desai articulates:

> **Aline**: "Then that would problematise the whole notion of an Indian Identity?"
>
> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "Absolutely, because people are differing. I mean if you ask a Muslim on a Friday who he is he will say he is Muslim. Maybe if you ask him on a Monday he'll say that he is an Indian and on Wednesday he will say that he's an Arab. So these things are incredibly fluid, maybe sometimes you see yourself as a woman, sometimes you are an Indian and at other times you are a geographer." (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000)

During the period under review, a number of plays and cultural events were staged which problematised South African "Indian" identity. One of the classic plays out of the 1970s[64] which was staged again during 2001, is Kessie Govender's "Working Class Hero". It is a bitter work, about the Indian

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64 When the play was first shown in Durban's Stable Theatre in 1977, Govender faced the wrath of the Indian community With the help of Indians, Special Branch policemen beat him up so badly he suffered fractured bones and a perforated eardrum. (Mail and Guardian, 7 September 2001)

community's fraught relationship with apartheid. Govender wrote the play to "expose the double standards evinced by many South African Indians during the apartheid years" (*Mail and Guardian*, 7 August 2001). The play, set on a construction site, shows the malicious and patronizing attitude of an Indian charge hand and bricklayer toward their black "boy", Frank, portrayed by Govender. The scene set, the bricklayer's brother arrives at the site looking for work. He is a university student who is appalled by his brother's treatment of Frank:

> "Its bad enough for him to be oppressed by the white man's hatred and laws, but then to get Indian prejudice too, now that's a heavy burden" he tells his brother. "You shut up. I've got nothing to do with politics!" yells his brother. His sibling retorts:" You've had everything to do with politics since you were born in a hospital for blacks." (The Working Class Hero)

Indians during apartheid were not required to carry the "dompas" or identity pass and were not as severely affected by job reservation. The tensions arising out of Indians caught in limbo between the oppressor and the oppressed are portrayed vividly in the play, which shows characters cosying up to the former and distancing themselves from the latter. Or as Frank, the "boy" puts it, "...The Indian likes it too much the colour bar." (The Working Class Hero)

2001 was the year in which the World Congress Against Racism was held in Durban. Several other cultural events were staged during this year, an opportune time for South African Indians to reflect on their cultural identity in post-apartheid South Africa. Also dealing with Indian identity during the apartheid years is "Imperial Ghetto", an exhibition of black and white photographs taken by Omar Badsha in Durban's Grey Street area during the 1980s. Badsha says,

> "... the ghetto grew as the poor and illiterate from the African and Indian countryside, together with the Bombay merchant, poured into the city to find themselves having to live cheek by jowl, being forced to bond because of their common disabilities and to create new identities in the margins of the white colonial city." (*Mail and Guardian*, 7 August 2001)

Badsha echoes the concerns of "Working Class Hero" when he says:

> "...The pictures are about growing up in the shadows of the 1949 race riots and the heroic efforts of the Dadoos, Naickers and the hundreds of

> socialist and congress activists to overturn the legacy of Gandhi's
> Indianness and to forge an inclusive Indianness." (*Mail and Guardian*, 7
> August 2001)

The forging of ties with Africans were a common occurrence during this period, bonded by the common socio-economic conditions.

Another cultural event taking centre stage at the World Conference Against Racism was the dance-drama Sunghursh. It traces the history of Indians from before their migration from India to the present day, incorporating all the upheavals that took place along the way. Rakesh Maharaj the scriptwriter says that,

> "... The story starts in 1800 with the pure folk dances of India. Then we
> move to South Africa and the early struggle of Indians to establish
> themselves in Natal. The narrative moves from the Gandhi era to the post-
> Gandhi era of the Doctors' Pact when Indians and Africans joined forces
> against apartheid. The 1949 Riot, the Group Areas Act, the Freedom
> Charter, the armed struggle, the 1976 student uprising, the release of
> Nelson Mandela ..." (*Mail and Guardian*, 7 August 2001)

The dances move from traditional to contemporary, and culminate in a spectacular township dance sequence that incorporates a variety of different dance styles in South Africa today, a hybrid mixture.

Quite clearly all these plays and cultural events problematise South African "Indian" identity. In the 'Working Class Hero', the racism that abounds in the Indian community is exposed, in relation to Africans. The play was staged during the "World Conference on Racism" since these issues are still relevant today. As Kessie Govender maintains, South African Indians are intent on "...overturn(ing) the legacy of Gandhi's Indianness and to forge an inclusive Indianness." (*Mail and Guardian*, 7 August 2001). It is possible too to reject Indianness altogether or to incorporate it into a complex hybrid identity. All these are "counter-essentialist" discourses. This chapter is concerned with is, the dominant themes that have played themselves out in the public sphere and contributed to shaping the counter-essentialist Indian discourses.

7.2.1 "I am an African"[65]

"Black "was initially used in the 1970s and 1980s in Great Britain to encompass the common experience of racism and marginalisation (Hall, 1983). Similarly in South Africa, the anti-apartheid activists identified with the signifier Black, as it represented the defiance of apartheid, a system Africans, Coloureds, and Indians were victims of. During many interviews and through the media analysis, it was clear that South African Indians continue to utilise the signifier Black, with statements such as *"I am an African".* It allowed groups who were heterogeneous to respond in a collective and overtly political way to their exclusion by the dominant culture and to their representation as Other:

> **Visven Reddy**: "… You know I am an African because I live in Africa, but I am of Indian origin. But my only link with Africa is some forefather of mine whom I don't even know who came from India here. But I have now established myself here in SA. I work here, I toil here. My family have their roots here. Now I treat with absolute contempt people who try to link us up with India, because at the moment we are hearing the problem with the job situation and elsewhere where we are told we are Indian. Now if we were Indians then we were born in India, but we were not born in India we were born in South Africa. Now having said that, I am very intrigued - and others who come to critically analyse the situation in this country, I would like them to ponder for a moment what is happening in India, you know what is happening in India is sickening to the core. I came on the air and gave the story last week about a woman that was raped and then murdered and then burnt alive because her son took off with a high caste girl. This still exists in India and that cannot be denied. I have nothing to do with that … *I am an African, I belong to this democracy and really to link us up to India in this way is incorrect …"*
> (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 3 July 1999)

Visven Reddy articulates that he is "African" because he was born in Africa. He distances himself from India, because of the violence that has occurred there. Clearly there is an "us" and a "them" at work here, where "us" is African and "them" is Indian. In Visven's discourse of African-ness, he is African in part because caste differences do not matter in South Africa, or at least do not lead to violence.

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65 Of course, this dissertation does recognise that an African identity is an essentialist one. But in this context, adopting an African identity is counter to an Indian identity and thus is viewed as "counter-essentialist" here

In a paper written by Ronnie Govender, a playwright and anti-apartheid activist, he notes:

> "At a recent seminar I objected to being called an 'Indian' playwright. For years, the media, notwithstanding the occasional enlightened editorial, were very much of the apartheid regime's not so 'subliminal' games of mind control and, despite my protestations, insisted on referring to me as an 'Indian' playwright. Athol Fugard has never been referred to as a 'white' playwright' and I have not noticed Mbongeni Ngema being called a 'Zulu' playwright.
>
> A young participant at the seminar reacted with indignation. My implied assumption of a single national identity and the apparent ignoring of my 'Indianness' was regarded as the 'the ultimate arrogance.' My response to this nascent Africanist stance was perhaps, with hindsight, almost as impetuous. I said: 'You and I are genetic accidents. Neither you nor I have had any choice in the matter. While my wife may wear a sari and I may eat curry and rice, I am an African. I was born here and I am a South African, in as much as those born in Britain are British, and those born in France are French and nobody has the right to deny me my birthright.'"
> (*The Daily News*, 20 October 1999)

Dr Adam Habib, the Director of the Centre for Civil Society at the University of Natal, Durban made similar comments in 2003,

> "… About six months ago I was invited to the University of Pretoria to participate in a debate with Xolela Mangcu, the director of the Steve Biko Foundation, on why race (and ethnic) relations seemed to be more contentious as the transition progressed … During question time, a member of the audience expressed reservations about my criticism of aspects of our democratic transition and attributed my views to the fact that I was 'Indian'. I protested both at my classification as 'Indian' and the attribution of views to the pigmentation of my skin. I informed him that I was fourth-generation South African, had never been to India, and did not even speak an Indian language. And I stated that even if my ancestry lay in India some five generations ago, who was to say that this lineage did not extend further to Mongolia or England a few generations earlier, or even to the Spanish peninsula and the African continent a couple of centuries before that." (*Mail and Guardian*, 8 January 2003)[66]

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66 Even the redefinition of the racial groups in the post-apartheid period has created discontent "The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 enshrines these differences in law There are three recognized kinds of black people. Those who are now known as black used to be known as black, coloured and Indian. Those who are now known as African are black people who are not coloured or Indian … All those who are used to known as black, coloured, Indian and white are now collectively known as South 'African' in the Constitution. We are all 'Africans'. It's just that some of us are more African than others". (N.P. Kuhn, Cape Town, *Mail and Guardian*, 21 June 2002).

Like Ronnie Govender, Dr Adam Habib expressed aversion at being labelled an Indian when he expressed, in an academic environment, his discontent with racial categorization continuing in post-apartheid South Africa. He responded by denying this classification. It was meaningless to him, for he does not even speak any of the Indian languages. For him none of the attributes, even the pigmentation of his skin, classifies him as Indian, so why should his views be regarded as "Indian"? Observers may attach a certain identity to Indian South Africans, who are broadly critical of the transition as the quote demonstrates. Clearly in the media, we see this discontent being expressed, with headlines such as "South African Indians the most gloomy" (see Box 1). This racial signifier is hurting people like Ronnie Govender and Dr Habib, who want critical space within the society, but do not want to be identified as "anti-transition" - therefore such people would choose to see themselves as African.

On another discursive terrain a white South African also says that he is "damned proud to be African" (*Sunday Tribune,* 14 July 2002). Peter Davis, the editor of the *Sunday Tribune* adds:

> "I am reminded about an insidious attitude that seems to be creeping in among my black friends and among those who see themselves as the intellectuals and who verbalise these things in meetings and conversation. The general tenor of this mindset is that to be an African, you must be black. Not only black, but indigenous black. Now I have a problem with this attitude, which I find personally insulting and dangerous similar to the worst nationalist ideology we have all experienced before ... I am African, and proud of it! I was born in Africa ... The minister in the president's office, Essop Pahad would claim to be African, I am sure. New eThekwini city manager Mike Sutcliffe is African, as is Fatima Meer. My colleague and editor of *The Mercury*, Dennis Pather is African, as is trade Minister Alec Erwin. ... Most of the people in this country are African full stop."

Davis problematises the notion that being an African is merely about skin colour. Being African in this sense shows your sense of belonging to the country, South Africa, thus it is about patriotism rather than race.

7.2.2 "We are the Poor"

In an article in the *Saturday Independent*, Dr Ashwin Desai poses an important question: "Can we (South African Indians) really pat ourselves on the back?" Dr Ashwin Desai in his thought-provoking piece (Box 23.), questions the various stereotypes that South African Indians use to portray themselves, as well as the images through which they are represented in the public sphere.

Box 23

"Can we really pat ourselves on the back?

By Dr Ashwin Desai, Agent Provocateur

***Saturday Independent,* 18 November 2000**

Stories of the resilience and the resourcefulness of the Indian community have reached their acme in recent weeks as the leaders of the community have organised celebrations to mark the 140 years since the arrival of the first indentured labourers. Article after article eulogised the virtues of the Indians' great traditions, the philanthropy of its businessmen, the hunger for education and the commitment to the extended family. Running through this rendition of history is the evoking of the great resistance fighters who risked everything for the cause.

But Indians always had their collaborators with the system. The merchants who saw compromise as a mechanism for personal advancement even if it meant differentiating themselves from and abandoning indentured labourers and their offspring.

After all, Gandhi himself was forced out of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) just before he left these shores for fraternising with the 'coolies'. Later the Indian political leadership was to agree to a policy of repatriating Indians. More recently the State-sponsored South African Indian Council (SAIC) and House of Delegates (HOD) found willing participants. Many of these participants were simply there to ensure the protection of their own interests at the expense often of the sons and daughters of the indentured labourers ...

At another time the SAIC objected to an area for coloureds close to Indians because 'the Transkei coloured has much in common with the Bantu and the possibility of increasing social contact between this area and the Bantu in KwaMashu.'

These same Indians supported the murderous raids of the apartheid regime into Maseru and

Persisting with this myth produces an insidious racism. 'We started at the same level but look where we are. We are better'. This is a short step to cultural racism.

In the *Daily News* earlier this week Professor Chandru Kistan writes that 'unity among Indians is maintained through religions and customs. The glamorous wedding ceremonies, the colourful garments, the sacred places of worship, the decorative homes and the variety of mouth-watering dishes elevate the once-indentured Indian as both unique and special in a democratic country with a tapestry of cultures, races and religions'. It would be an interesting exercise to unpack the good professor's words, for in them is revealed the lie propagated as fact.

Among Indians are a host of religions. Actually religion in the community acts as a source of division. The last time I checked I found no general customs that Indians adhered to. Some eat pork, others do not eat beef, some are vegetarians, some believe in one God, others many, a few speak vernacular Indian languages, others only English.

But the real rub lies in the alluding to decorative homes, mouth-watering dishes and colourful garments; the successful model, exotic minority. The Indian women who combine home and roti-making by day and by night are the dusky heiress to the Kama Sutra and the Oriental harem.

Where do the growing Indian poor stand in all this? Are they an embarrassment to be hidden from view? The ones that go hungry at night with hardly any clothes? The ones being evicted from their hovels? The relatives who never get invited to weddings? The ones who have coloured wives, or, lo and behold, African boyfriends? The lesbians and the divorcees?

Why do we persist in painting this picture of our selves being so principled? We led the liberation struggle? The champions of charity? We have unity? And if this is true, why then have we turned our backs on the Indian poor? Why the extended family broken down and why has are more abandoned by their own families? Why do

Zambia. I did not see any of them at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The truth is, Indians have no better or higher traditions than whites or Africans. The idea of putting Indians on some higher moral pedestal because of their 'success' is a lie. It fails to factor in the fact that while Indians were discriminated against, it was not at the same level and intensity as Africans. And they often prospered at the expense of the African.

we regard single mothers and their children as aberrations and treat them with derision?
By painting this false picture we cut the poor off from funding and other forms of help because the Government thinks that all Indians are well-off. Poverty is not a crime, my fellow Indians. It is a crime to deny it, to ignore it. And intellectuals must stop this falsification of history. It hurts the Indian poor who, by the way, are making common cause with the poor of other communities, rather than with rich Indians.

The employment of such images as: "cohesive community", "charitable", "hunger for education" and "commitment to the extended family" Desai argues, creates not only a false image of South African Indian society but also acts as a means to isolate the community from the broader mainstream society. In this sense Ashwin maintains that these stereotypes hurt the poor in the Indian community, as the maintenance of such stereotypes prevents the broader South African society from seeing the poor in the South African Indian community. On a deeper level, Desai deconstructs essence of "Indian-ness" that is propagated as fact thus demystifying the myths.

The political-economic context that led to the creation of "we are the poor" identity marker needs further discussion here. This is a signifier that cuts across and represents the interests of different racial groups. Various social commentators have suggested that the use of "Indian" as a category hurts the poor Indian, as there is a perception that all South African Indians are rich. As the following dialogue between Dr Ashwin Desai and Professor Kumar illustrates, the new struggle is about poverty and not racial identity:

> **Professor Kumar**: 'My attempt in understanding either the Indian or the South African question is not to praise it or defame it. It is an attempt to understand in what conditions are we led to either express our allegiances or hostilities. I would encourage - in this world, our lives are becoming more interrelated, how we begin to understand how we are addressing issues of the disadvantaged in trying to talk about Indians or South Africans. Are we really trying to talk to those who are suffering and struggling?"
>
> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "The new struggle is about poverty" (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 3 July 1999).

At the Conference on Indians in the New South Africa, held on the 27th April
2001, an audience member eloquently elaborated on the real struggle of South
African Indians, again constituting it in a counter-essentialist manner as a struggle
against poverty:

> **Audience Member (Male)**: 'Let me tackle the last question ... the new
> South Africa. In my own view I often find if you look at the history of
> social struggle, you look at the history of the manufacturing of identity.
> All identity doesn't exist in reality, all identity, you know, a white identity,
> a South African identity, is a mythic, it's a progressive phenomenon ...
> The problem with identity is that it - I guarantee you it will be to the
> disadvantage of poor people because frankly the Indian working class, the
> Indian professional classes, and the Indian poor are actually very different
> people, they are all very different. The Indian merchant class can afford to
> send their children to other countries. They don't have to bond their
> houses and borrow money from family and friends to give their children
> education.
>
> *In my opinion far more useful than an Indian identity is an economic
> identity.* Let there emerge social movements that represent these sectors
> of our population and I think ... that it is a far more progressive discipline
> because I think that it does not entrench racialised identity, it doesn't
> entrench race. Because you can't actually be non-racial, to be honest,
> while at the same time wanting to entrench a racial identity, and the only
> thing that we do have in common is the colour of our skin. Even that is
> even dubious because if you go to the London American conference you
> will see people with similar kinds of skin who are not Indian at all. So we
> have to come to terms with that. If you want to articulate, if you want to
> represent the interests of the poor, let social movements emerge that
> represent the interests - All indications are suggesting that the electorate in
> its voting intentions are surprisingly non-racial and it's actually surprising
> when you come from a racialised background. People don't say 'I am not
> voting for that party because he is African' ... people say 'I am not voting
> for that party because its policies are such and such and that is it' - that's a
> sophisticated - and it's not my research, every single survey indicates that.
>
> In all parts of the country, in large parts of the country, and that would
> mean the African population, the Indian population, the Coloured
> population, ... social struggle not only in Chatsworth but in other parts of
> the country, where Indian, Black and Coloured people are getting together
> and standing together as one. But it's the kind of political struggle that's
> involved. There's a move - Indian and Black workers together in a
> combined social movement to fight for their own social economic
> struggle. And sometimes they must get what they want, and that's how

> you build national reconciliation and non-racialism." (Conference on
> Indians in the New South Africa, 27 April 2001)

The audience member makes the distinction quite explicit, that the racial category Indian hurts the poor as it is a common perception that "Indians" are wealthy. Therefore this drive towards an authentic Indian-ness and an attempt to create a homogenous Indian identity actually hides the poor in the community. Any form of Indian essentialism (no matter how strategic) should be abandoned because it results in the obscuring of the plight of the Indian poor.

Recent events in Durban that led up the creation of the counter-essentialist discourse of "we are the poor" are examined briefly below.

"The Poors" of Chatsworth

Chatsworth is located in the south of Durban. In the 1950s, Indians were rounded up from all over Durban and dumped in "group areas" such as Chatsworth. In post-apartheid South Africa, this former Indian group area has become a place of struggle. The euphoria of the 1994 elections and the hopes for a better life did not last long. The state lowered tariffs on imported clothes and the result was that the local textile industry was decimated and tens of thousands of jobs were lost (Desai, 2000). The total number of jobs in the textile industry dropped from 435 000 in 1995 to 166 000 in 1999.

Coupled with the radical loss of income, the 950 residents of Bayview, Chatsworth were served with eviction notices, since they were in arrears in terms of payment for services. Water and electricity cut-offs followed. By 1996, 40 % of tenants were in arrears and the Durban City Council sent 50 men with guns and dogs to evict people from their flats. In the late 1990s, the Concerned Citizens Group (CCG) was formed consisting of Dr Ashwin Desai and Professor Fatima Meer at the helm, with representatives from Bayview, Chatsworth. In an interview with Professor Fatima Meer conducted in 2000, she elaborated on the formation of the CCG:

"We went to the area in May to campaign for votes for the ANC. We were totally overcome at the high levels of neglect and poverty in the area. This is when we decided to get involved and work with the local councillors and try to improve conditions for tenants." (Interview with Professor Fatima Meer, 23 November 2000)

The media followed the struggle extensively and the following captions express the tone of the struggle:

- "A Daily Struggle to make a living" (*Tribune Herald*, 18 July 1999)

- "Great-gran gets election reprieve" (*Daily News*, 23 September 1999)

- "The War of the Flatlands, CCG: Champions of the poor or manipulators of the desperate?" (*Independent on Saturday*, 19 January 2000)

- "Struggle on our doorsteps" (*Sunday Tribune*, 19 November 2000)

Clearly the place, Bayview, had become a site of struggle for the poor; in this case the poor from all racial groups, Indian and Africans (although the population of the area is largely Indian).

At the Conference on Indians in the New South Africa, Ms Orlean Naidoo, the Chairperson of the Westcliff Flat Residents Association, elaborated on the effects of the new South Africa on the poor:

Orlean Naidoo: "I am so frightened for this liberation and democracy ... Ladies and gentleman these are two points that we must think about. I come from the beautiful community of Bangladesh [another Chatsworth suburb], beautiful because we are a community that cares for each other. We are beautiful because we are non-racial. Here Indian and African unite because we share a common plight and common enemy. Recently my organisation, the Westcliff Flat Residents Association, has embraced people living in the informal settlement called Legola Settlement. They are African and we want them to be a full part of our community, not living like lepers on the margin of our flats. We want them to have proper housing and sanitation facilities.

But we are also ugly. Ugly because we live amongst thriving poverty. Old women live abandoned, single mothers beg so that their children eat. The cripples get turned away from the - many wait years for pensions, that never arrive and die ... hoping only to be given a proper burial. But we

are also ugly, ugly because the most evil of those in power are always visited upon us. At the micro level ... the poor unemployed woman does not make headlines. At the macro level the council cut off water, electricity and used violent forces to evict us from our households that our parents were forced into by the violence of the Group Areas Act. The asbestos roofs leak, and the toilets and showers are damp and the walls are green with rot. And there are no doors and recreation facilities. Some of these homes, they will want to claim the thousands that we owe them. It is the same council that condemned private buildings in similar conditions.

We are tired of the formal political parties, we are ... we are sick of the story of the reports of the apartheid. We want to talk about our present situation, damn the past. I am glad that the poor are speaking for themselves for today. For too long the rich and highly educated dominated the politics of our country. Every other week we see some rich Indian in another Black employment scheme. All of them talk about how they suffer under apartheid, the law that harassed them and how the police attacked them and how much it lost under apartheid. But when we talk about our oppression and show we suffer, the same voices say that we are lazy, we do not want to work and we do not want to pay. If we are Indian, they say we cannot be poor. Are they happy to see us in the rags, begging to survive? The rich must realise that many of our parents work in the factory for meagre wages and many of us do. We made them wealthy while we suffered; now they use our oppression to get into empowerment schemes. If this council is to achieve something, then we must confront the class divides in our community and not ... rewarding, rewarding the rich Indian and hurting the poor. Is our salvation in the poor of the community or is it with the other rich Indians? We do not expect or desire handouts but we expect that those who are rich, who are living in fabulous houses to start not only to give when Mandela comes along. (applause) To hold projects that will give our people skills, to ensure that poverty will go away. The poor in Chatsworth and elsewhere are tired of promises of a better life for tomorrow, next week or next year ..." (Conference on the Indians in the New South Africa, 27 April 2001)

As Orlean Naidoo eloquently explains, the racial category, 'Indian' hurts the poor. She also emphasises that being poor is more important than being Indian – poverty does not distinguish between "Africans" and "Indians" in the city. Thus the emergence of this new social movement in Chatsworth is indicative of a hybrid identity that is formed at the intersection of mutual interests of different racial groups. It is in this light that Ashwin Desai maintains that being Indian is a "meaningless concept":

Ashwin Desai: "Because I expect I don't see anything particular that is Indian, and people say I am an Indian. That is a meaningless concept in terms of where we are what we are doing, the Indian in Unit 3 Bangladesh is not like the Indian in Blue Lagoon playing their loud rap music. And I feel by keep saying that we are Indian, we are hurting the poor Indian because the poor Indian is caught up in this idea that they are general middle class Indians. So the poor Indian is not able to get RDP money, the poor Indian is not able to get into Natal University or Natal Technikon through a means test, that person is seen like an Indian like me ... So a person that is coming through school, for example who's a daughter of a single mother who has lived on a grant all her life passes matric, comes to try and get into Natal University and is then seen as an Indian. And the African who's in private school gets ahead of her, how does that help being Indian, it's hurting us. *We must explode this notion that there an Indian, we must.* There's the poor as a category as more important, Indian is important but the poor - a means test should be used to see whether people get in or not."

Aline: "But then why do you think that they are holding onto this Indianness?"

Dr Ashwin Desai: "Because we haven't offered them anything else. When we go to Chatsworth there was the Minority Front there, that was reinforcing Indianness, now in all our meetings, there are so many Africans, people talk of themselves as the poor of Chatsworth, not as Indian ... we were even able to gel the community because we didn't have to worry about Hindu, Christian and all that. And the African people felt comfortable about talking about the poors of Chatsworth and that is fabulous, the way people have gelled around issues, so the Indian is a meaningless thing and I really don't want to bust your bubble but there's nothing about the diaspora, about this link with India, I don't know why but there isn't. And especially amongst the young which should be the next generation, everybody wants to emigrate in this country for example they want to emigrate to Canada, New Zealand, England or America but not one of them wants to emigrate back to the motherland, but I am not saying whether that should be a litmus test of whether we have a link, but really nobody wants to emigrate to their motherland. If you had to put the paper in front of them, one air ticket for a once in a lifetime holiday and you ask 500 people there who are under 30 and I can tell you that no more than 5 people will say India." (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000)

As Dr Desai points out, "...We must explode this notion that there is an Indian," "we are the poor" is identified as one of the counter-essentialist Indian discourses. "We are South African" is another counter-essentialist discourse identified.

7.2.3 "We Are South African"[67]

In a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 1999, respondents were asked how they identify themselves. Almost two-thirds (61 %) of the sample saw themselves as South African, a label that was especially popular amongst Indian, white and Coloured respondents. On closer examination, 82 % of Indians - the highest of all the other racial groups - saw themselves as South African (HSRC, 1999). Clearly a political point about 'belonging' was being made here.

In a less formal survey conducted by a local Durban newspaper on the issue of South African nationality, an overwhelming majority identified with being South African (*Post*, 15-18 November 2000). These are some of the responses:

> "I am a South African national of Indian origin. The fact that I was born and raised here makes me a full citizen and not half Indian and half South Africa. The success of many Indian people in this country should not be seen as Indian, but that of South African." (Mr Collin Pillay);

> "Our focus should be on the development of the economy. While I acknowledge the fact that my origins are in India, I feel I have no ties with the country. I am a South African through and through, whether my origins are in Timbuktu, Malaysia or India." (Mr Pregasan Chetty)

The survey conducted for this dissertation at the University of Natal, Durban, amongst 45 respondents (undergraduate students), revealed the following patterns:

Table 10: How would you best describe yourself?

South African Indian Origin	13 %
South African Indian	44 %
South African	24 %
South African Hindu	4 %
South African Muslim	2 %
South African Indian Muslim	0 %
South African Christian	2 %

67 I am aware that being "South African" is a nationalist discourse linked to a programme of nation-building and thus in a sense essentialist; however in this context it is asserted against an identity of essentialised Indian-ness and thus is considered counter-essentialist.

Indian of South African Origin	0 %
Indian South African	7 %
Other	South African Christian of Indian Origin (2 %) Vaishnava (2 %)

Thus 44 % of the sample of 18-29 year olds views themselves as South Africans of Indian origin, and 24 % as simply South African. However as shown by Table 11 (already presented in Chapter Six), it is clear that while the respondents acknowledge their roots, only 9% would consider returning to India, while an overwhelming 91% would emigrate to other countries. Thus the identification serves as a symbolic signifier.

Table 11: If you had to emigrate, which country would you want to emigrate to?

United Kingdom	40 %
India	9 %
Australia	22 %
America	20 %
Other (State country)	Germany 2 %, Scotland 2 %, Holland 2 %, Italy 2 %, Arabia 2 %

In the Radio Lotus Talkshow entitled "Pure Chutney", a respondent makes clear that while there are negative aspects to the transition, he is South African and he is proud of it,

> **Devan**: "... I have just two points to make. We are South Africans, we are proud of what we are. The guest there in the studio, he claims to be from India and he is of Indian origin and as Indians they are proud of their country because there's a saying in India that holds very true in India, and I think that Professor Kumar will bale me out here, Mere Bharat Mahan He, they are proud of their country. We are proud of South Africa but we are watching the playing fields being levelled. We are not going to let these negative aspects make us think negatively, we are positive people, we know where come from and we are happy to be South African citizens."(Radio Lotus Talkshow, 3 July 1999)

Another caller, Mr Singh, speaking in broad dialect, claims he is South African and distances himself from India, which suffers from tremendous poverty. He

also states that he is tired of what he perceives as the condescending tone of the
professor (and in doing so asserts a common racial identity with other Indians!)

> **Mr Singh**: '... I just wanted to ask this Prof. whether he is an anti-Indian
> or a criminal. You know he is a bit insulting. These guys come from
> India. All the way they talk about Indians, what he expects, we Indians in
> SA must have tail like Hanuman? Ask him does he know Hanuman, must
> we have tail like Hanuman or are we crossed with the Dutchman or
> Hottentots? Do we look like Hottentots? We look like him, we have
> straight hair, and we can talk. Remember one thing we Indians in SA are
> very very unity and we are very well fed and we got very less beggars. In
> India there's so much beggars, this Professor should do something for his
> country and try and get something done ... the beggars and the pickpocket
> are terrible ...I have got a lot of respect for India but I belong in South
> Africa... " (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 3 July 1999)

The rejection of Indian-ness and the identification with South African-ness is
obviously an attempt to "blend in", to be viewed simply as South African citizens
and to be treated the same as other people in the same country. Dr. Ashwin Desai
also articulated this in an interview:

> **Dr Ashwin Desai**: "...I think that when my father and mother grew up,
> they - he was always a minority, we always had to be second in the queue,
> white man had to be first in the queue. If I ever do have children I don't
> want that for them, why must they always be faced with minority? Why do
> they become, Vice-Captain, Deputy Accountant? Why do we have always
> to aim one less? Why? ... You know isn't that saying something about our
> society, that if you happen to be Indian you always have to be Deputy
> Director of something because the African will be the Director, like in the
> old days when the White used to be the Director. Why are we always
> God's stepchildren and is this the legacy we want to leave our children?
> These are things that we need to explore ... that is why identity and what
> you are trying to evoke is so important - we must always be judged by the
> colour of our skin and second by who we are. Aren't the sense of being
> Hindu sometimes much more closely to being African than an elite
> African Cyril Ramaphosa? ... The sense of ubuntu, the sense of sharing,
> the sense of commonality. Shouldn't we then be saying, who is African?
> He is still coming into being, there is no African that is genetically and
> biologically, you know - so what you are doing in the transition it's vital,
> it's the question to be answered." (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13
> October 2000)

Here Dr Ashwin Desai states quite explicitly that throughout South African
political history, South Africa Indians have always been a minority. During
apartheid "white man had to be first in the queue" and now in the post-apartheid
era the "African will be the Director". By asserting an African or better still a
South African, identity, this place of "in between-ness" can perhaps be escaped.
In this view, the attempt to assert a strategic "Indian-ness" is misplaced and
greater identification with Indian diasporic concerns can only be going in the
wrong direction.

While many South African Indians claim a South African national identity there is
also a sub-set that draw from Indian origins, but merely because it has become
popular to do so, signalling a hybrid identity.

7.2.4 Discourses of Hybrid Playfulness/Global Consumerism

In an interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, the Radio Lotus station manager, Veeran
states that he has experienced resistance from the community to changing the
representation of Radio Lotus as a "custodian of Indian values", thereby revealing
the real hybridity in the community (see Chapter Five). Dr Veeran is aware that
Radio Lotus has historically signalled a pure Indian-ness, however he is cognisant
of the changes in the community and argues that the radio station must reflect
these; its content must be trendy rather than traditionalist, South African rather
than narrowly Indian.

> **Dr Naresh Veeran**: 'Okay, I think when I say Lotus FM didn't respond to
> the changes, I mean probably didn't get a chance to respond to the
> changes, not that it didn't want to. Probably it didn't have a chance to
> because you see, the station – I mean for a minority group like the Indian
> community, there are not many icons in the community that maintain, that
> they can associate with their identity, like are reminders of their roots or
> whatever it is. Lotus I think has become for them ... a custodian of their
> traditions. It becomes, it's an icon, of everything that is good about the
> Indian community, or maybe it's a link to India, it's an imaginary link to
> that homeland or whatever it is, but people perceive Lotus to be very much
> a custodian of tradition, a holder of everything that is good about the
> Indian community, everything that is cultural about the Indian community,

everything that represents the Indian community is embodied in Lotus FM.

The problem that has prevented the station from going forward as a business, as going forward as a radio station, it becomes involved in language problems, it becomes involved in religious problems, it becomes involved in - There's the case of the community expected certain things from the station and in return for that it managed to prevent the station from going forward. Now when I came in here, I said 'Listen, Indian people don't walk around in saris anymore, they dress in western dress, go to western institutions'. Even the whole segregation idea of schools and all of those things have now dissolved, so much so that you have a generation of people growing up, who may not necessarily want to be Indian, who may be Indian by virtue of the colour of their skin but little about them is suddenly Indian. Especially young kids you know, people under the age of 25 say, who have this thing about not being Indian, and there are people who deliberately don't want to be Indian, there's a group who keep away from everything that is Indian because whatever reason, maybe historical reasons or whatever the reasons are …

So what we need to do is focus on a certain group, with a certain kind of idea, with a certain kind of outlook on life and say 'Listen I am Indian in a sense of that my traditions and my roots are there, but I am also South African first as well, that's what makes me South African.' I am trying to create a station that says that as well. I am South African, this is a South African radio station but our roots are Indian and we recognise that, we are going to show it, and that is what the plan is for next year, to launch a station like that. (Interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, 3 November 2000)

Media personalities themselves are revelling in their hybridity and in the "coolness" of being Indian. For example, Ragini Archery, a radio journalist, considers herself a South African who chooses to follow some Indian habits and ways: "I light the lamp, or I wear a bindhi and sometimes a sari. I don't do it everyday, but once in a while it just feels good to do it." (*Indigo*, March-April 1999). Mr Strini Pillay, a popular actor said, "As an actor I have many faces, while the real me is proudly South African, yet strongly Indian" (*Sunday Times KZN*, 1 August 2004).

In a casual conversation a young female teenager said:

"Amongst the girls my age it has become trendy to dress in Indian prints, or wear Indian accessories, such as bangles, bindhi or mendhi. These have

> become trendy items that are detached from the religious/cultural symbol ... We are very individual now, we have our own styles and ideals and we don't feel the need to cling to the idea of India to establish our identity." (personal communication, 4 July 2003)

The teenager states that it has become trendy to be Indian, signalling participation in a global consumerist discourse of Indian-ness. However, this is taken very lightly; it reflects a playful hybridity in which she strongly maintains her South African identity.

The popularity of Bollywood also points to the "commodification" and "reification" of elements of Indian culture for consumption. Bollywood movies have taken South Africa by storm as evidenced by the Indian movies being shown at all major theatre outlets. Being "Indian" has become trendy. Various elements of Indian culture are featured as "exotic" and thus appealing to a western audience.

Bhangra is viewed as a hybrid form of music genre, since it mixes together eastern and western musical styles. This form of musical style is popular among the younger generation Indian diasporic population (See Literature Review). It is an emerging subculture in the Indian diaspora that is a powerful signifier of the younger generation Indian. Bhangra is also increasingly popular in Durban, where Bhangra is not only a feature of the local club scene but with also international Bhangra artists visiting.

7.3   Political Expressions: An Analysis of Voting Patterns

The movement to produce counter-essentialist images of Indian-ness is also deeply political, since many of the individuals that question this categorization and identification (i.e. this assigned *and* asserted identity) are concerned that if the Indian community continues to be "insular", they will lack political clout and access to social and economic privileges. They will "marginalize themselves" and, as seen in the "we are the poor" discourse described above, will perpetuate

stereotypes that hide the real poverty in Durban's Indian community. This thesis would be incomplete without a brief analysis of South African Indian voting patterns since 1994.

Voting patterns are a site of struggle, where politicians make essentialist or counter-essentialist arguments regarding Indian identity in an attempt to get votes. South African Indian voters express their political identities in a way that is heterogeneous rather than uniform. Analysts have concluded that racial identity is not the primary motivating factor in the way coloured and South African Indian people vote. South African Indians have effectively displayed their allegiance and non-allegiance to the ANC-led government, through their voting patterns. There were two broad camps in voting patterns to the 1994 General Elections, South Africa's first democratic election. One camp was supportive of the ANC-led government and the other was non-supportive and thus voted for other political parties, such as the Democratic Party (DP, now the Democratic Alliance), National Party (NP now the New National Party), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the Minority Front (MF).

In the run-up to the 1994 General Elections, there was considerable speculation about how Indians would vote. A poll commissioned by *Post* (*Post*, 5-9 April 1994) in April 1994 suggested that 46 % of South African Indians had faith in de Klerk (NP), while only 14 % supported Mr Nelson Mandela and 5 % supported Mr Buthelezi of Inkatha. A disturbing feature of the poll was that 33 % were undecided as to who they would support. The *Tribune Herald* (10 April 1994) aptly captured the fears and dilemmas of South African Indians on the eve of the 1994 elections:

> "The community ... has suffered doubly under apartheid. Blacks have seen Indians as privileged and for decades whites have oppressed them. The fears are understandable: crime has soared; homes set aside for Indians have been taken over by other groups, and there is still disquiet that Indians as a community are perceived to be successful in business. The memories of the Cato Manor riots will not fade away."

In the event, South African Indians showed strong support for the NP. These results were derived by focussing on areas that are largely Indian since it is impossible to isolate individual areas. According to the Independent Electoral Commission, overwhelming political support for the 1994 General Elections in Natal went to the NP (41, 2 %). The IFP got 26.6 %, while the ANC received 32.2 % of the vote. In their analysis, Desai and Maharaj (1996) focus on the election results in Chatsworth, since this is the largest Indian residential area. The election results for 1994 in Chatsworth reveal that 64.2 % of the population voted for the NP and 25.3 % voted for the ANC at national level.

Before the 1999 General Elections, sociologist Yunus Carrim predicted that a large proportion of South African Indians would vote for the ANC:

> "It would seem that the history of Indian people, their past political engagement, their subordinate position under white minority rule and the virulent anti-Indianism of the NP in the past, would constitute an important foundation for the ANC to win significant support among Indians." (*Daily News*, 10 November 1999)

However there was again significant amount of Indian support for the NP, compared to the ANC in the April elections in 1994[68].

In a letter to the editor of *Post* (Box 24), Mr Anil Singh expresses strongly his view that Indians should vote for the liberator political party – the ANC. He suggests various reasons why South African Indians voted for the other political parties in the 1999 General Elections and expresses outrage at their voting behaviour. He asks whether "Indians" living in South Africa, as a small minority group, want to be given different status and privileges from the rest of the population. Certainly his response is counter-essentialist, for he believes that there nothing peculiar about South African Indians that sets them apart from the rest of the South African society. This idea is captured by newspaper headlines

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[68] The Indian vote only received cursory attention in the analysis of the 1994 elections (See Friedmann and Stack, 1994; Giliomee, 1994 and Reynolds, 1994)

such as "Indian voters urged: Don't remain on the sidelines" (*Post*, 2-5 June 1999).

Box 24:

"Proud to be South African who voted for a Liberator"

(Letter to the Editor, *Post*, 16-19 June 1999)

Do "Indians" living in SA, as the smallest group, want to be given different status and privileges from the rest of the population? Do "Indians" consider themselves as part of a minority or part of a majority? Are "Indians" saying that they do not want this democracy but want to return to the dark ages of apartheid and colonial rule, to pick up the little scraps thrown to them by the previous regime? Have "Indians" forgotten the loss of human dignity suffered by them because of the previous regime? Where are "Indians" going to? This was answered clearly in June 2, 1999. The "Indians" in SA in general, in KZN in particular and KwaDukuza, Tongaat, Verulam, Phoenix and Chatsworth specifically have shown that, in five years, they have forgotten the atrocities of the past regime. They have forgotten the struggle for liberation by some of our greatest leaders in the mould of Naicker and Dadoo (a few names amongst many). "You have spat on the graves of our forefathers" (quote Gitanjali Pather - *Post*) by voting for our past oppressors in the form of the so-called "New National Party" and Democratic Party (a leopard never changes its spots). It's also shameful that professionals like doctors, lawyers, and in particular teachers did

not even register to vote, a vote that thousands have fought, losing their lives, to achieve. Shame on you. The next thing I try to fathom is, where did the concept of "minority" and "majority" come from? Shouldn't we consider "oppressor" and "liberator"? How can the DP (so called opposition) and NNP make any contribution for change? To my belief they're only occupying valuable space. (Even Mr Rajbansi has seen the light.) It seems that those with their nice big glass houses, posh cars, etc wanted the ANC government to give them more. They wanted the ANC government to forget about the masses who go daily without food, shelter and basic necessities. They have forgotten that this situation was created by the very same people/parties that you voted for. You forget that with democracy comes transformation and reconstruction which leads to equity. It shows that you have no conscience, but are selfish. You have forgotten all the religious teachings of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity that preach "equality in the eyes of God". I salute those people who have fought for the liberation of SA, who have lost their lives in their quest for democracy, and who have been tortured and imprisoned in their search for justice. I am a proud South African who voted for the liberator. Viva ANC viva

Anil Singh, Stanger.

In the run-up to the 2000 Local Government Elections, newspaper articles captured the mood of the election fever. Once again the Indian vote received attention in the media. The following captions capture the mood of the elections in the newspaper articles as expressed in the public sphere:

- "Indian fears need sympathy" (*Daily News*, 21 January 2000)
- "Don't pick on Indians, Zuma told" (*Post*, 18-21 October 2000)
- "Battle hots up for Indian vote" (*Post*, 22-25 November 2000)
- "Indian 'class vote' likely" (*Sunday Tribune*, 25 November 2000)
- "Indian's vote is anyone's guess" (*Post*, 29 November 2000)

- "Indians may stage stayaway" (*Sunday Tribune*, 3 December 2000)
- "Join the majority, Mandela urges Indians" (*Sunday Tribune*, 3 December 2000)

Desai and Maharaj (1996) suggest that throughout South African political history South African Indians have expressed divergent political collaboration. One group sought an exclusive Indian politics and collaborated with the white ruling class in order to receive various concessions to improve their socio-economic status. On the other hand, the other groups sought alliances with the other disenfranchised groups, more especially the African National Congress and rejected collaboration with the white rulers.

Moreover Habib and Naidu (1999) in their analysis of the 1999 General Elections show that despite the common assumption within academia and the media, that there would be an "Indian" vote, South African Indian voters displayed electoral heterogeneity with different *classes* voting differently. Habib and Naidu (1999) suggest that this voting behaviour is largely the result of the simultaneous application of an affirmative action policy with a neo-liberal programme that increased the economic vulnerability of the poorer sections of the coloured and South African Indian communities. Their analysis suggests that the middle to upper income classes voted for the ANC, while the lower income coloured and South African Indians were more likely to vote for other political parties. Moreover, as already noted, their analysis suggests that racial identities are not the primary motivating factor in the way coloured and South African Indian people vote.

7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has examined four counter-essentialist discourses to authentic Indian-ness, namely:

- Discourses of "I am an African";
- Discourses of "South Africanism";

- Discourses of "We are the Poor";
- Discourses of Hybrid Playfulness/global consumerism

Each counter-essentialist discourse exposes the hybrid nature of the identifications. While there is a move in the South African Indian community to create imagined communities of essentialist identities, there is also a counter-move to disrupt the homogenous Indian identities.

Indian-ness is a complex and contested identification. These counter-essentialist discourses illustrate the different discourses being used by South African Indian's to re-imagine their identity. These discourses also show the internal differentiations of Indian-ness. While there are complicated debates around authenticity, there is a rise in certain sectors of the Indian community appropriating certain elements, and not all, of the Indian culture.

While some maintain they are African, born of the African soil, others claim a double-layered identity. They borrow elements of South African-ness as well as reified notions and global circulating articulations of "authentic" Indian culture, creating a cultural pastiche, a hybrid identity. These images of India as evidenced in hybrid forms, such as the mix of classical Indian dance with traditional African dance contest the images of India as an "ancient exotic civilization".

Taking my cue from Stuart Hall (1996) who identifies what he calls, "…the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject" (p.443). Further he says, "What is at issue here is the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category "black", that is, the recognition that "black" is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category" (Hall, 1996:443). These counter-essential and essentialist Indian discourses identified point to the end of the innocent notion of the essential Indian subject. Indian-ness is a constructed signifier, whether it claims authenticity or hybridity.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

"And this identity of marginality and eternal stranger poses
a number of questions. Are we Indian or African? How
could someone be both one and something other? If we are
both Indian and African, which one are we really? How
could the unity of identity have more than one face or
name? How do these real selves coexist and how do they
weld into one identity?" (*Post*, 29 November 2000)

8.1 Introduction

The intention of this study was to unpack and analyse the cultural strategies and
cultural contestations that South African Indians employ in representations of their
cultural identity in the public sphere. It has explored some of the ways in which
Indian cultural identity has been portrayed in the public sphere that challenge the
hegemony of the "Rainbow Nation" and "African Renaissance" ideology. These
cultural contestations were reviewed and analysed from media reports, interviews
with cultural leaders and other events that have featured in the public sphere. In
considering this challenge and some of the responses to it I have focussed on the
social constructions employed in the debate. I have also attempted to illustrate the
extent to which the debate has been concentrated around particular constructions of
Indian cultural identity, oscillating between an essentialised "Indian" identity and a
counter-essentialised "African" identity. Such constructions of Indian identity point
to the formations of "symbolic communities", linking to particular "imagined
communities." These multiple identity constructions are politicised and polarised.

At this stage it is useful to remind the reader the key objectives of this study. These were:

- o *To identify and unpack the main post-apartheid discourses around Indian identity in Durban;*

- o *To investigate the ways in which these articulations of identity link to particular places, or imagined homelands; and*

- o *To investigate the ways in which these contestations and articulations of cultural identity attempt to create "symbolic" or "imagined" communities.*

This dissertation is located at a point of tension, continually renegotiated, between the national and diasporic, the local and the global. The primary aim has been to elucidate the cultural strategies utilised in the public sphere in the everyday lives of South African Indians' diasporic communities, with particular attention to the simultaneous process of maintaining cultural connections with India, while negotiating a place within their host environment, South Africa. The following discussion summarises the main findings of the dissertation.

Discussion

As South African Indians feel increasingly marginalised in South African society, they have expressed their anxiety in the public sphere. Cultural mediators/entrepreneurs have attempted to create particular imagined communities, such as a global Indian identity, a global linguistic identity as well as counter- hegemonic/essentialist identities.   This search for a "place" in South Africa by the Indian community must be viewed historically. At particular moments in time, the Indian community in South Africa has displayed a greater diasporic consciousness than at others (For further discussion see Literature Review) (Raman, 2003).

This conclusion addresses the eloquent question Raman (2003:18) poses: "...why have some Indian South Africans turned their gaze towards India once more?" The discussion attempts to answer the latter question and is structured around the following themes:

- o *The eternal stranger;*
- o *Asserting the difference;*
- o *The Shifting nature of Indian-ness;*
- o *Forging transnational identities in a transcultural world and Shifting Roots*

The eternal stranger

This dissertation has attempted, in part, to grapple with the crucial questions posed: "And this identity of marginality and eternal stranger poses a number of questions. Are we Indian or African?"(*Post*, 29 November 2000). Historically Indians framed their existence and understood their identity as "strangers", the "Asiatic menace", "coolies", "victims", "slaves" and "unassimilable aliens" in South African society, as reflected in "official" discourses. Through an analysis of the interview and media material, these categorisations continue to be reflected in particular discourses identified in the public sphere and articulated by South African Indians, identifiable as a "minority". In an interview with Devi Sankaree Govender she accentuates this point, "Indians can't see themselves as being part of the bigger South African community, and they know they are a minority..." (Interview with Ms Sankaree Govender, 7 September 2000).

Furthermore Raman (2003) contends that it is at the intersection of particular circumstances and historical junctures that a greater diasporic consciousness arises, where the diasporic community identifies more strongly with the "motherland". This she says is human beings "making sense of their predicament" conjoined with "the power of narratives of dispersal, loss and suffering, which call for some form of political dispensation" (p 6). This search

for belonging is not a feature of South African Indians only, diasporic literature suggests that Indian diasporic communities have created "little Indias" and "exclusive" communities in their new environment in order to re-create a sense of order in their new environment (Mishra, 1996). Commentators argue that historically South African Indians have felt "alienated" in South African society (Raman, 2003). This has been clearly exposed here, in the analysis of discourses identified in the media and interviews. This dissertation identified contemporary discourses of "marginalisation" and "vulnerability", echoing their colonial existence.

Raman (2003) shows how in the 1940s the "Indian-ness" invoked by Yusuf Dadoo for political gains galvanised the South African Indian community and helped create a unified "Indian-ness". This attempt was primarily because they felt marginalised in the political and economic spheres due to legislative and institutional measures. That particular historical moment is very similar to the one that is occurring at the moment, post 1994 liberatory politics. Captions such as "First not white enough - now not black enough" (*Tribune Herald*, 22 July 2001) and "Indians are second class citizens" (*The Leader*, 20 August 2001) highlight some of the emotions expressed in the public sphere. Coupled with the perception that affirmative action policies are unfairly practised on South African Indians and the massive unemployment due to the downsizing of the textile industry, as a group, South African Indians have felt increasingly "isolated" from mainstream society and increasingly self-identified as "outsiders".

Their isolation has been further amplified with sentiments such as "Indians urged to join the majority" (*Sunday Tribune*, 1 November 1998) and "Indians' fears are misplaced, says Mandela" (*Sunday Times,* 28 November 1998). Of course this is reflective of the majority of the South African Indian population. Interestingly the higher economic classes identify with the ANC and espouse a counter-essentialist African identity. These groups have embraced the category black, thus benefiting

from affirmative action discourse and have successfully been enriched in the process.

The dissertation also examines the question of racial stereotyping. Dr Ashwin Desai argues that, "...They will blame it on the government; the government happens to be Black and therefore they have racial forms of thinking, but they are not racist." (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000). However it is the poorest of the Indian population who are negatively affected by the government's economic policies. As Dr Adam Habib suggests, there are "...differential political responses to the transition by the different classes in the Indian...communities" (Interview with Dr Adam Habib, 9/11/2000). Although there are segmented responses to affirmative action amongst the South African Indian population, it is perhaps the poorest of the poor who have largely been at the losing end (ironically) and thus are more likely to express a racist discourse based on fear. Coupled with the rise in crime, there is a feeling of a heightened sense of being disadvantaged and at risk in the new South Africa. Unsurprisingly, the issue of crime is also cloaked in racial forms of thinking where often the perpetrator is "black" and the victim is "Indian" or other racial grouping. Indians are portrayed in the media as the "innocent" at the mercy of "Blacks", further enhancing their "vulnerability" in society.

While the government has adopted an "African Renaissance" ideology and reassured the South African Indian community that "You are as African as me" (*Sunday Tribune*, 10 September 1999) they have felt increasingly marginalised in the political and economic spheres through not being "African enough". The response from South African Indians has been fear and a desire to "defend" itself as a community under attack.

That these discourses of marginalisation and vulnerability have been utilised by cultural mediators such as Mr Amichand Rajbansi is evident in the political rhetoric of his political party, "Minority Front". His political message very

clearly states that: "Indians – Unite behind the MF. The Minority Front says stop: the violence and killings, sidelining of Indians in jobs, the killing of policemen, discriminatory Affirmative Action policy, the destruction of language and culture, action against our school cleaners and loss of jobs" (See Figure 5). He identifies and appeals to the community's feelings of "marginalisation" for his political gain.

Whilst South African Indians feels increasingly marginalised, they are still stereotypically seen as "wealthy" or "fat-cat shopkeepers" (The Natal Mercury, 29 March 1999). The objectification of Indians was brought sharply into focus with the publishing of the *Ilanga* editorial and the "Amandiya" song. Both cultural artefacts demonstrate the tensions that exist between Indians and Africans in KwaZulu-Natal. In the lyrics to "AmaNdiya" meaning Indian in Zulu, Indians are accused of taking over Durban, exploiting Africans, and voting for white political parties. Ngema urges "strong men to stand up to Indians." In AmaNydia he states that "the reason we are faced with hardship and poverty is because everything was taken by the Indians, but they turn around and exploit us. Our people are busy buying from Indian shops" (See Frontispiece). Therefore not only are South African Indians feeling marginalised, their position is made even more precarious by the feelings expressed by members of the new Black elite.

The discourses of "vulnerability" and "marginalisation" are therefore a factor that exacerbates South African Indians' "minority status" and illustrates their precarious position as the "eternal stranger" in post-apartheid South Africa. It is the contention of this dissertation that these discourses of "vulnerability" and "marginalisation" have created a heightened sense of diasporic consciousness, which in turn has lead to South African Indians *asserting* their ethnic/cultural difference in contemporary South African society for political expediency.

Asserting the difference

The analysis has provided evidence to suggest that South African Indians are "asserting their difference", mainly due to their perception of being isolated in South African society. In an interview with Professor Brij Maharaj he argued that "…broadly there is a heightened sense of being Indian" (Interview with Professor Brij Maharaj, 15 November 2000). The analysis suggests that there is a move by the Indian community to be a part of the broader Indian diaspora partly because as a community they begin to feel increasingly marginalized in South African society. Thus there is a decisive attempt to maintain their "difference" and to assert it.

The creation of a "cocoon" or "siege" mentality are typical descriptions of a community under "threat" (See Chapter 6) and this assertion of difference, whether ethnic or cultural, is an act of defiance. Ms Devi Sankaree-Govender identifies this mindset (she understands but does not support it): "… we are Indians, we are a minority so let's cling to what we have and the only thing that they have is the name called Indian, that's all there is." (Interview with Ms Devi-Sankaree Govender, 7 September 2000). Ms Govender as an authoritative cultural mediator explains that South African Indians perceive their position in society as under threat and therefore cling to being "Indian".

In addition to asserting a local Indian identity, other geographies are involved. Another way South African Indians are asserting their difference is through linking with India, their "imagined homeland". The analysis suggests that South African Indians are "experimenting" with a global Indian identity, through the creation of new cultural/religious and economic links to India, and that is indicative of the development of a diasporic consciousness centred on India as the imagined homeland. Again this phenomenon is not unique to South Africa as a Bollywood producer, Mahesh Bhatt is quick to point out, and

> "…You're making movies for the diaspora outside, which wants to have the comforts of the developed word. They want to stay in London and yet have their dhal and pickles and their spices

imported from India. They want their incense, their gods and their movies from India. SO the geography called India, has moved beyond India" (*Sunday Tribune*, 22 August 2004) (See Appendix for full article).

The literature review dealt extensively with the impact of globalisation on cultural identities, particularly on diasporic identities. "Time-space compression" has provided the means for South African Indians to maintain their cultural links to their "world" outside their nation of residence. The connectivity made possible by globalisation has had an inevitable impact on the expression of identities, as communication is quicker, even instantaneous.

Diasporic linkages like these have widely explored in other contexts. For example, Leonard (1994) in Gupta and Ferguson explores the strategies that recent immigrants or diasporic communities from India's Punjab and China utilise in order to find their place in California. She shows how these diasporic communities remade the geography of California's agricultural regions by overlaying the image of colonial Punjab on the Sacramento Valley or that of the three kingdoms of third-century China on the Imperial Valley. These cultural strategies were employed by these communities to show the continuity of their traditions. Paradoxically, Leonard argues, these cultural strategies point more to their "inventiveness" than to an assumed "continuity".

The theoretical term "the invention of tradition" is also useful here. Robins (1991) suggests that in the context of the emergence of heritage cultures, "tradition" has been subject to unprecedented change, that is, traditions are "invented" to ensure continuity for some communities. In this South African context, the 1860 Heritage Foundation is one such example where an attempt to commemorate the rich cultural history of South African Indians is undertaken through the establishment of a monument. Post-colonial literature suggests that such cultural strategies are attempts to ensure "continuity" of a culture and may signal a culture under "threat".

The collected texts analysed in this thesis are littered with numerous references to India as the "motherland", as the source of ancient traditions and civilisation. Raman (2003) shows that an essentialist Indian-ness was invoked by Yusuf Dadoo particularly influenced by Gandhi's influence on Indian politics in the 1940's: the creation of an Indian-ness was evoked in order to mobilise the community in the struggle for their freedom. This political strategy was an attempt to mobilise a community under "threat", and disenfranchised. Similar strategies are clearly being used today.

GOPIO is an interesting example to illustrate South African Indians' expressions of an identification and attachment to India. The website located at www.gopio.com calls on "Global Indian communities", asserting "Time is now for Unity". There is widespread criticism that GOPIO is a front for the creation and strengthening of global economic links with [who? The BJP?] (Hansen, 2002). However the Vice-president of GOPIO-Africa argues that GOPIO is an organisation that is set up to protect the interests of the "minority" Indian diasporic communities in their land of adoption. Here again the discourse of "marginalisation" is evoked although this is extended to the Indian diasporic community, creating a global imagined community, united by their marginal status[69].

Closer to home, the cultural contestation over Indian languages is not unique to South Africa but is symptomatic of Indian diasporic communities trying to maintain their culture and traditions in the face of westernisation and the pressures of the host environment. The literature review deals extensively with the predicament of Indian diasporic communities struggling to find their place in "British" society. In Durban the contestation is also symptomatic of Indians' attempt to assert their "difference" and defend their Indian-ness in a culturally

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[69] Interestingly, the links are not only uni-directional If one looks at the latest Bollywood movies, the South African landscape like many other global Indian diasporic landscapes comes to be portrayed in the movies. This is an important symbol that signals the emergence of South African Indians as a factor within the global Indian diaspora As these movies are circulated throughout the world particularly within the networks of the Indian diaspora, the South African landscape is now a frequent feature in the Bollywood movies.

diverse society. This cultural contestation also points to their "minority" status as expressed in the struggle to retain Indian languages at schools even though they are not popular amongst students. For some, if their Indian-ness is diluted, then also their difference, which is predicated on their cultural identity (linked to language), also becomes less potent.

In addition to South African Indians' response to contextual changes, (which have led to the assertion of difference), it is also important to note that the signifier "Indian" has changed historically. This is considered below.

Shifting Nature of Indian-ness

This dissertation proposes that, while the concept "Indian" has generally been used as though such a self-consciously identified group had existed at first contact with Europeans and Africans, immigrants to South Africa were assigned this identity, at a time when "India" itself did not exist as a nation. At their time of arrival in South Africa, they did not even conceive of themselves as "Indian".

In the indentured period South African Indians were generally perceived as "coolies". Later an Indian-ness developed with close association with India and Gandhi's passive resistance movement in the apartheid era. Ronnie Govender cites these multiple categorisations in his poem, "Who am I?" (See Box 20), where he articulates, "I have been called Indian, Asiatic, South African Indian, Indian South African, Coolie, Amakula, Char ou and Amandiya...I am an African".

It is true to say that, on the one hand, post-apartheid society has seen a proliferation of multiple subjectivities. As Professor Fatima Meer says, "I am an Indian and a South African, and an African, these are all my identities and I subscribe to all these identities" (Interview with Professor Fatima Meer, 23/12/2000). Concomitantly, however, an essentialised and reified Indian-ness is proliferating as evidenced in the analysis of the opinions voiced in the public

sphere. Contemporary South African Indians have clearly expressed an essentialist Indian identity that is isomorphic and homogenous - that is, a "past-historical identity" that draws on a fixed notion of India.

This is nicely described by Professor Kumar as: "a more political sense of India affixed as a sense of timeless essence that doesn't carry the marks of history on it" (Radio Lotus Talkshow, 3 July 1999. In this sense the idea of India that South African Indians carry, is translated into an artefact that is fixed in time, devoid of the caste violence and the poverty occurring there. India is transfixed in time, as an ancient civilisation. This essentialised conception of "India" provides a powerful core for South African Indians to draw on.

The dissertation has attempted to disaggregate key components of the discourse of fundamentalist or essentialist Indian-ness currently being articulated in the public sphere in Durban. Indian-ness is constructed both as a "geographical identification" and as a "state of being" (See Chapter 5). Thus Indian-ness is an imaginary construct whether it is constructed geographically in terms of religious affiliations or simply Indian consciousness: Indian-ness is constructed rather than given.

In addition the analysis also identifies the following themes of essentialist Indian identity, namely: a romanticised past, eternal/timeless essence, Indians' charitable nature, Mahatma Gandhi's influence and resistance, morality and the industrious/hard working nature of Indian people. All these themes point to an image of an "authentic" Indian-ness. This is well put by Ms Bharathi Pillay:

> "Not only is ours a "lofty culture" as Gandhi proclaimed, but in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours and I am conscious that I, too, like all of us, I am a link in the unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it" (*Daily News*, 5 November 2000).

Re-creations of India are valorised and Indian-ness is constructed as superior to other cultures.

Such as essentialised concept of authentic Indian identity implies both an abundance and a lack. Depending on where one is situated with regard to "homeland" and "host", it is conceivable that either privilege or disempowerment could be constituted by such notions as 'too Indian" or not "Indian enough". For instance particular cultural mediators draw inspiration from India, for cultural and religious inspiration that is "untainted" and "pure". There is privilege associated with being an "Indian" priest who hails directly from India and performs prayers and rituals in South Africa. Spiritual leaders who do not come from India, and have not visited the sub-continent, may be considered less authentic.

Radio Lotus us a useful terrain where the cultural contestations over Indian-ness is apparent. As the analysis shows, a deliberate attempt has been made by particular cultural mediators to ensure that Radio Lotus remains an "Indian" radio station, "...the South African Indian has fought long and hard to preserve and further his culture in this country, so please don't throw away this by introducing more and more Western items in it" (*Tribune Herald*, 25 July 2004). On the other hand there has been an attempt to increase the stations' listenership through the introduction of Western songs. This is clearly viewed by some as the "contamination" of Indian culture. Despite the fact that the majority of South African Indians are unable to converse in Indian languages and therefore many of the songs played are probably not understood, what is striking here is the deliberate attempt to "maintain Indian culture" that is not contaminated by "western influences". The station manager's attempts to introduce a more complex and open agenda at the station, failed.

The dissertation has also attempted to draw attention to the fact that the signifier "Indian" is being used as a political tool – that is, I have tried to draw attention to the strategic essentialism implicit in some deployments of the terms. Taking Stuart Hall's point that the signifier "Black" was used in the seventies and eighties to encompass the common experience of racism and marginalisation (Hall,

1990:163), this dissertation proposes that the signifier "Indian" is also used historically to encompass the common experience of marginalisation and discrimination in South African history, in a strategic essentialist manner.

Although these "essentialist discourses" are dangerous in ethnic and nationalist terms, the identifying label "Indian" may be useful because of the shifting nature of what it signifies. From being tied to notions of Gandhi, to being a political tool, the signifier Indianis constantly evolving. The ambivalence of the signifier "Indian" thus opens up the possibilities of narratives and identities that are, as Hall writes, "constantly producing and reproducing themselves, anew, through transformation and difference" (1990:402). Thus a deconstruction of the notion of Indian and Indian-ness suggests that although essentialism is undoubtedly present, its deployment may be strategic. On a deeper level, identities are contingent, often multiple and evolving. This opens the space in which there are multiple and polyvocal narratives, where as Dr Ashwin Desai says, "...these things are incredibly fluid, sometimes you see yourself as a woman, sometimes you are an Indian and at other times you are a geographer" (Interview with Dr Ashwin Desai, 13 October 2000).

Assigned identities, however, are dangerous. Historically Indians in South Africa were viewed by the white ruling class as more as an actual threat than black people (Maharaj, 1997:137). This was largely because Indians at that time were far more upwardly mobile and were capable of buying their way into white areas, whereas black people mostly could not. After their indenture period the labourers were released from their jobs and given the choice of returning home or staying as "free" people (Scott, 1994:31). Many stayed and turned to market gardening and trading as a means of generating income (Bagwandeen1983: 2). Many Indians were successful in this venture and were viewed as an "economic threats" to whites. Through successful entrepreneurialism they were able to increase their standards of living and move into the white suburbs. This was seen by whites as "Indian penetration".

The point is that the signifier Indian generally pointed to a "minority" group. It is not simply the case that South African Indians reify their identity by touting an "essentialised" identity; other racial groups have long identified them as "a homogenous group". There is a clearly a danger in constructing a discourse that allows the dominant culture to continue to essentialise and marginalise the other. Under the apartheid government, Indians were essentialised; this continues to occur, as Indians are seen as the "exotic other". Even Indian languages are seen as "foreign" (See Chapter 5). The other racial groups continue to see Indians as associated with "saries, samoosas and BMW's". Such stereotypical descriptions mask the heterogeneity in the community.

While the older generation tries to essentialise Indians, the younger generation challenges these stereotypes. Young up and coming Radio DJ, Sorisha Naidoo is depicted in an advertisement for satellite television with a sari and a jacket. She says, "Millions of South Africans listen to me daily yet when I listen to my inner voice, it echoes my Indian spirit" (*Sunday Times KZN*, 25 July 2004). In an interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, he too challenges these stereotypes of a homogenous Indian identity, "…you have a generation of people growing up, who may not necessarily want to be Indian, who may be Indian by virtue of the colour of their skin but little about them is suddenly Indian…" (Interview with Dr Naresh Veeran, 3 November 2000). If you cannot be easily essentialised, you may be free enough to give voice to new stories, new identities.

The multiple discourses of identity dynamics revealed here point to the fragility and instability of identity. As the character in *The Satanic Verses* Shahid, says, "There was no fixed self, surely our several selves melted and mutated daily? There had to be innumerable ways of being in the world, he would spread himself out, in his work and in love, following his curiosity" (Rushdie, 1998: 328). The numerous discourses revealed in the construction of Indian-ness veering from essentialised Indian-ness to counter-essentialised Indian-ness, point to the instability of South African Indian identity. This also highlights the shifting

nature and fluidity in time of Indian identity. In Gilroy's conception of the "Black Atlantic", the construction of Black-ness happens in a fluid and elastic space that is neither the United States nor Britain nor the Caribbean. This insight is equally fruitful in the context of KwaZulu-Natal. The evolving nature of Indian-ness creates a fluid space, that is neither South Africa nor India, nor any other diasporic Indian communities, but in the liminal slipzone between "home" and "host".

Furthermore the multiple identities under the rubric Indian reveal its hybrid nature. In these transcultural and transnational spaces, what are needed are new metaphors through which we can understand new cultural movements. It is this that Appadurai is after when he notes that "our very models of cultural shape will have to alter, as configurations of people, place and heritage lose all semblance of isomorphism" (1994: 336). He proposes using the idea of overlapping, mathematical fractals as a way of representing the shifting and continually open-ended interplay of cultures in an age of mass migration and mass mediation. Without such a fluid model, we will "remain enmired in comparative work which relies on the clear separation of the entities to be compared, before serious comparisons can begin" (1994: 337). Such a conception also provides the possibility of escaping from a flattening liberal multicultural vision of society in which, as the novelist Sunetra Gupta says, "if you wear a Tibetan waistcoat and eat a Thai meal and read a bit of this and that you feel that you are somehow integrated, or that you have created a space where people can live".

Instead, Appadurai offers a metaphor in which difference cannot be so simply and completely appropriated because of the way it slips beyond the dominant culture's ability to define and control it. Though power and dominance are still at work in this model, heterogeneity is a constant that "*flows*" and redefines itself even as it is appropriated and commodified by the dominant capitalist culture. This resilience is indicated in the material analysed here. The combination of classical Indian and traditional African dance has elicited incredible debate. While some

classical Indian dancers attempt to keep the dance "pure" and "uncontaminated" through mixing with other dance forms, there are various "hybrid" dance forms emerging.

Forging Transnational Identities in a Transcultural Space – "Shifting Roots"

The literature review has extensively with the impact of globalisation on spaces and the emergence of transcultural spaces and discourses of global Indian identity were explored in Chapter 5. The global discourses articulated by South African Indians remind us that we are located in transnational and transcultural spaces, defined by Arjun Appadurai (1994) as "imagined worlds" where alliances and allegiances coalesce, dissolve, and coalesce again along the lines of ideas and images. Such allegiances are continually re-staged across, rather than within, stable nationalist cultural narratives. South Africa is still attempting to create stable cultural narrative from Rainbow nation to African Renaissance.

Postcolonial literature explored in the literature review explores the diasporic experience in Britain, where "Black British" challenges the notion of "Englishness" as homogenous and unitary. The response of the dominant culture to post-colonial immigration has been what Stuart Hall calls a "defensive exclusivism…an embattled defensiveness of a narrow, national definition of Englishness, of cultural identity" (1990:177) In South Africa South African Indians seem to be adopting a similar "embattled defensiveness" in response to the creation of an "African identity" based on the rhetoric of the African Renaissance. The congealing of an Indian identity that is homogenous and unitary often occurs in the public domain in relation to the assertion of an African Renaissance, from which Indian people fear they might be excluded. This in part is a defensive response to socio-economic conditions of isolation and vulnerability in present day South African society.

Historically religion served as a key marker of differentiation. Added to this, apartheid created particular "group areas" in which different racial groups were forced to reside and most places of worship and religious sites were located in such areas. Currently, global communications are the key means through which people are staying connected with each other, as spaces and places become more fluid and new identifications are evoked. Through the internet a sense of community is invoked, albeit an imagined one, but nonetheless symptomatic of the need to create cultural and social alliances that foster a sense of identity in the wake of displacement unleashed through the process of globalisation.

India to South African Indians is "imagined", as the majority of the South African Indian population have not visited India, yet this dissertation has noted the creation of various "symbolic communities" linking to India, within the Durban population. South African Hindi-speaking and Tamil-speaking individuals not only show allegiance to India and Sri Lanka respectively, through voicing their opinions in letters to the editor, but also have the electronic means now to do so (the internet and satellite television). DStv hosts ZeeTV and is soon to host Tamil TV. A recently published "SA India" magazine provides news about India, particularly the Bollywood scene, to local South African Indians.

Importantly, commentators have suggested that the Internet has become a viable means of maintaining an "imagined community" (Hall, 1997 and Castells, 1989). Cyberspace allows diasporic communities to transcend their isolation, their nostalgia, their displacement and form themselves into an "imagined community". The Indian digital diaspora (See Appendix E) is inscribed via both personal Web pages and institutional or commercial sites which reproduce an elaborate system of social, cultural, religious and professional organisations, all of which coalesce around ideas of commonality of origins and present lives, shared culture and heritage. For example when the AmaNdiya song was aired, Indians throughout the world shared their opinion about it on the Internet in "The Times of India".

Not only are there diasporic imaginings of India as one entity, but these are also fragmented along linguistic lines with North Indians and South Indians espousing different allegiances associated with the right wing politics of the BJP and the Sri Lanka political situation respectively. Dr Ashwin Desai observes "...a resurgence of people starting to attach themselves to the North Indian and the South Indian consciousness.... Because there isn't such a thing as a homogenous Indian community". (Radio Lotus, 20 July 1999). Many South-Indians although not from Sri Lanka themselves, identify with the struggle of their "Tamil brothers and sisters" (Sunday Times, 7 April 2002). A perusal of the internet sites reveals that a cyber-network of religious and cultural affiliations is growing. The VHP which is a strong feature of the South African Hindu community has sites in the UK – www.vhp-uk.com and a global site www.vhp.com (See Appendix E).

Located within this transnational and transcultural space, South African Indians are forging diasporic links. This not a new phenomenon: as postmodern literature has suggested, with increased connectivity deterritorialised communities struggle to find their place and many do so through forging links with other diasporic communities. In addition this dissertation has also shown how one such historical juncture is occurring now, where local and global conditions have created the space for a "greater diasporic consciousness" among South African Indians.

The discourses that this dissertation has identified suggest that due to their "marginalisation", "vulnerability" and "alienation", South African Indians have re-created a more inward-looking and exclusivist identity. This is not a new phenomenon amongst South African Indians who have historically tended to display a greater diasporic consciousness when they felt under threat. However what is different about this particular "moment" is that there are multiple identities forming. The analysis addressed these as counter-essentialist identities that challenge the essentialist identities. (It is important to remind the reader that all identities are contingent, "imagined" and constructed.

This dissertation has revealed the co-presence of multiple identities which include a local identity, national South African identity, communal identity (very important in Durban where Indians constitute 2.5 % of the general population) (South African Survey, 2001/2002), ethnic identity, nationalist identity (nurtured by the Indian government), a past-oriented historical identity (Ancient Indian civilisation), a cultural identity and class identity. All these identities are located within the continuum proposed by this dissertation from essentialist (including strategic essentialism) to overtly counter-essentialist and hybrid.

The Indian-ness that is represented in this dissertation is shifting, from Dr TP Naidoo's abhorrence of the fusion mix of Indian dance, to Krijay Govender's assertion that the only sign of her Indian-ness is the bindhi (whenever she chooses to wear it) on her forehead. While cultural entrepreneurs attempt to create particular fixed and stable Indian identities in the space of the public domain, the hybrid voices "contaminate" them through discourses of "I am African" or "I am South African". Therefore there is not a simple definable culture that can identify within this mix. There are only the multiple narratives that re-position the subjects in ways that disrupt the homogenous mythology of the dominant culture.

This fluidity occurs within the context of attempts to create particular "imagined" communities. All these imagined communities whether they are appeals to an Indian diaspora, a Hindu diaspora even a Tamil diaspora, are symptomatic of a "community" under "threat", repositioning themselves in a new political dispensation, where once again the rules have changed. All these appeals by the respective cultural mediators to create essentialised identities were found to be negotiated around difference, that is, we are Indian and not African, etc. The strong urges to create "homogenous" identities expose the highly contested and negotiated terrain of Indian identity politics.

This search for authenticity is hybrid, as Chandra reminds us:

> "And the devil is of course within ourselves: the most vociferously anti-Western crusaders I meet are inevitably the ones who are most hybrid. It is these comfortably situated citizens, these Resident Non-Indians, who, beset by a consciousness of their own isolation from "Real India", feel an overpowering nostalgia for an Indianness that never was, for a mythical paradisiacal lost garden of cultural and spiritual unity. From their fear of the mongrel nature of their own selves, from their fear of the new Indian tongues spoken by their mongrel children, grows the golem-demon of the All-devouring West, in whose dread shadow a koel becomes a secret signal of betrayal, and the word "dharma" a fatal compromise."

The counter-essentialist discourses identified in this thesis are indicative of the hybrid identities prevalent in the South African Indian community that disrupt the search for authenticity. It is Homi Bhabha (1994:2) who reminds us:

> "...terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in the moments of cultural transformation."

South African Indians have clearly articulated their difference as a minority. This re-imagining and re-created "diasporic consciousness" signals the "shifting roots/routes" of South African Indians at this particular historical "moment". The contesting discourses of Indian identities identified in the public sphere during the time period, 1999-2002 provides evidence to suggest that race relations demands deeper analysis particularly at the micro level.

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Appendices

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Appendix A:

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

1. Contemporary Definition of Indian Cultural Identity

1.1 General Themes

- What characteristics do you think define Indian culture and identity? In other words, what makes you an Indian ? (food, religion, dress)
- In what way does the local Indian culture practiced in Durban differ from the Indian culture practiced in the subcontinent of India?
  - Explain these differences?
- How would you define yourself?
  - Do you see yourself as South African, South African Indian or Indian South African or IndoSafrican (Pat Poovalingum's coinage)

1.2 South African National Identity

- How do you feel about the South African flag and the anthem?
  - Do you identify with them?
- How do you feel about Indian languages not being included in 11 official South African languages?
- Do you feel a part of South African society?
  - Which is home to you, South Africa or India?
- Recently the Ilanga newspaper carried an editorial piece voicing deeply anti-Indian feelings where the writer hoped that one day, "...a woman would be blessed with giving birth to an Idi Amin in South Africa?"
  - Do you think that the latter editorial piece describes relations between Indians and Africans?

1.3 Issues of Indian Languages

- Do you converse in any of the Indian languages?
  - If so, what language is it?
  - Do you think that it is necessary to speak it?
- What did you think about the scrapping of Indian languages at schools and the Language Department at the University of Durban-Westville closing down?
- Are you aware of the efforts of the "Eastern Languages Action Committee" (ELAC) efforts to reinstate the Indian languages at schools and if so, what do you think about them?

1.4 Sport

- In cricket matches between India and South Africa, which team do you support?
- During the "Hansie Affair" what where feelings with regards to how India was represented in the media?
- Recently the media reported on the events in Sri Lanka and the formation of the "Tamil Eelam Committee". Do you think that we should be concerned about the killings in Sri Lanka?
    - Why?
    - Furthermore the same committee held a protest when members of the Commonwealth gathered in Durban, as well as when a match was scheduled between Sri Lanka and South Africa, what do you think about their actions?

2. South African Indian Responses to and the Perceptions of the Transformation process, since 1994?

2.1 Politics

I understand that this information is confidential, but if you feel comfortable about sharing this information with me, please do so.

- What is your political affiliation?
- Why have you voted for this party
- In your opinion, why did many Indians vote for the Minority Front, the New National Party and the Democratic Party?
- Do you think that the African National Congress has the best interests of Indians at heart?
- Do you feel secure as an "Indian" in the current dispensation?
- What is your reaction to "affirmative action"
    - In your opinion, does this policy benefit Indians in any way?
    - Have you had any personal experience with this policy?
- What does the African Renaissance mean to you?
    - Do you perceive it as a threat to Indians in South Africa?
    - If so, why?
- How did you react to the statement that Thabo Mbeki made during his election campaigning, while addressing a crowd of Indians, "You are as African as S'bu and me"? Do you feel that he meant that? Do you feel African?
- What was your reaction to the poor residents of Bayview being evicted from their homes in Chatsworth?
    - Do you feel that certain racial groups, get preferential treatment in the New South Africa?
- Are you optimistic about your future in South Africa?

o   In what way? Why?

2.2 Cultural Activities
- What Indian cultural activities, do you participate in?
  o   If so, when and where do you participate in such activities?

Cultural Organisations

- Can you name the cultural organizations that you are a part of?
- In your opinion, do South African Indians participate in cultural organizations more than before (prior to 1994)?
  o   If so, why do you think so?

Fundamentalism

- Are South African Indians retreating into their religious enclaves?
- Are you aware of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad movement in South Africa?
  o   If so, what impact do you think that the VHP could have on South African Indians?
  o   Do you see this movement growing in South Africa?

Habits/Customs

- Have you read Indigo (out of circulation), Vishwa Shakti or the Tamil Guardian?
- Do you listen to Radio Lotus, Radio Hindvani, Radio Phoenix or other?
- Do you watch Eastern Mosaic, East-Net, Zee TV?
- DO you watch Indian movies? If so, how often do you watch them?
- Do you prefer to eat traditional Indian food, Western foods or a combination of both?
- Do you prefer to wear traditional Indian clothing, Western clothing or both?
- Do you think that Indian weddings and other events are done the traditional Indian way?
- Do you listen to Indian music? Why?

Cultural Connectedness

- What do you feel you have in common with:
  o   Indian South Africans, why?
  o   Indians from India, why?
  o   White South Africans, why?
  o   Black South Africans, why?

3. Connections to India

- Have you tried to trace your ancestral roots?

- o   If so, do you know from which part of India you are from?
  - o   What prompted you to trace your roots?
- What images come to mind when you think about India?
- Have you ever visited India?
  - o   If so, what where your perceptions of India?
  - o   Where do you feel you belong to; India or South Africa?
  - o   Which is home to you? Are both home to you?
  - o   If you had a choice, would you return to India?
- Do you feel connected to India? If so, can you describe the connection?
- In the latter part of the 1999, an Indian businessmen Mr Janak Parekh imported 200 kg of soil from 70 religious sites in India to South Africa. Through this gesture, he felt that South African Indians would have a greater link to India. How do you feel about this gesture?
  - o   Do you think that having acess to the "soil" of their "motherland" would make them feel more connected to India?
- Do you have family links to India?
  - o   Do you communicate with them and if so, how often?
- Do you purchase literature concerning diasporic Indians?
- Are you proud of what Indians throughout the world are accomplishing?
- What do you think binds Indians throughout the world together?

Appendix B:

Details of Interviews and Other Miscellaneous Activities

Table 1: Details of Interviews

No.	Name	Profession	Fully Transcribed	Date
1	D. Bramdaw	Editor of the 'Leader', Chairman of the Block AK Action Committee and Chairman of the Journalism Liaison Board at M.L. Sultan Technikon	Yes	18 May 2001
2.	Y. Devan	Newspaper Columnist	Yes	1 June 2000
3.	Professor Brij Maharaj	Geography professor at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Member of the Hindu Dharma Sabha	Yes	15 November 2000
4.	Mr Satish Jaggernath	Post Newspaper Columnist	Yes	1 November 2000
5.	Dr Anand Singh	Lecturer in Social Anthropology at University of Durban-Westville	Yes	17 November 2000
6.	Mrs Shireen Munsamy	President of Global Organisation for People of Indian Origin, Vice-president of GOPIO Africa and Author of "From	Yes	14 May 2001

		Sunset to Sunrise'		
7.	Mr Kamal Panday	Member of Parliament, IFP	Yes	29 November 2000
8.	Professor Fatima Meer	Director of the Institute of Black Research, Sociologist and Author	Yes	23 November 2000
9.	Mr Padmanathan	Director of the International Centre of Performing Arts and President of 'The Tamil Eelam Committee'.	Yes	30 October 2000
10.	Mr Rajesh Gopie	Playwriter, actor, Won the Fleur de Cap Award for the best indigenous play, 'Out of Bounds'	Yes	31 October 2000
11.	Mr Krish Gokool	President of the 1860 Heritage Foundation.	Yes	28 November 2000
12.	Dr Veena Lutchman	Lecturer of Indian Languages, University of Durban-Westville, Eastern Languages Action Committee.	Yes	3 November 2000
13.	Mr Farouk Khan	Journalist of Natal Newspapers and Social Commentator	Yes	1 December 2000
14.	Dr Naresh Veeran	Station Manager of Radio Lotus, Musician.	Yes	6 May 2000
15.	Dr T.P. Naidoo	Director of Indian Academy of South Africa	Yes	3 October 2000
16.	Ms Alimal Cooper	Deputy Mayor of North Local Council, ANC	Yes	18 September 2000

17.	Mr Joseph Samuel	Retired School Principal, Keen Indians Cultural Historian	Yes	24 November 2000
18.	Dr Adam Habib	Lecturer at University of Natal, Durban, School of Governance	Yes	9 November 2000
19.	Dr Ashwin Desai	Social Commentator, Teaches part-time at the Workers College, Department of Journalism, Technikon Natal, Author of 'South Africa is still Revolting', 'The Poors of Chatsworth' and 'Arise ye Coolies'.	Yes	13 October 2000
20.	Ms Devi-Sankaree Govender	Radio Lotus Talk Show Host, Features Editor for the Sunday Times	Yes	15 October 2000
21.	Mr Mysore Lokesh	Ex Indian Consul-General in Durban	Yes	12 October 2000
22.	Mr Pat Poovalingum	Lawyer, DA Supporter	Yes	25 October 2000
23.	Mr Ram Maharaj	Principal of Reservoir Hills Secondary, President of the 'Vishwa Hindu Parishad'	Yes	30 October 2000
24.	Mr Kamal Maharaj	Education Department, National Secretary of The VHP	Yes	31 October 2000
25.	Ms Ela Gandhi	Grand-daughter of	Yes	6 October

		Mahatma Gandhi, Member of Parliament ANC, Member of the ANC Women's League		2003
26.	Mr Ronnie Govender	Anti-apartheid activist, playwright, author and social commentator	Yes	1 October 2003
27.	Mr Marlan Padaychee	Political Journalist, Academic	Yes	

Table 2: Details of Radio Lotus Talkshows

Theme of Talkshow (Radio Lotus)	Date
1) Education Crisis	28 June 1999
2) Poverty	29 August 1999
3) Interview with Thomas Hanson	24 June 1999
4) 'Pure Chutney'	3 July 1999
5) What does it mean to be Indian?	20 July 1999
6) Panel Discussion with Political Leaders prior to Elections	4 November 2000
7) Evictions in Bangladesh	23 March 2000
8) Evictions in Bangladesh	24 March 2000
9) Rates	10 November 2000
10) Job Losses	5 September 2000
11) Azananian People's Party	3 November 2000

Table 3: Cultural Activities Undertaken

Activity	Date

1) Conference on Global Organisation for People of Indian Origin	28 January 2000
2) Arya Pratinidhi Sabha Conference	2 December 2000
3) 'Indians in the New South Africa	27 April 2001
4) Vishwa Hindu Parishad Rally 'Hindu Back to Basics'	28 March 2001
5) Book Launch of ' The Poors of Chatsworth' Ashwin Desai	11th November 2000
6) Meeting of the 'Tamil Co-ordinating Committee of South Africa'	26th November 2000
7) Sunghursh, The Historic Struggle of the South African Indian, by Smeetha Maharaj	6 September 2001
8) 'Women in Brown', by Krijay Govender	11 June 1999
9) Mahatma Vs Gandhi	4 October 1998
10) 'Out of Bounds', by Rajesh Gopie	15 June 1999
11) 'The Working Class Hero', by Kessie Govender	28 August 2002
12) Minority Front Political Rally	15th November 2000
13) "1949" Written and	12 September 2002

Directed by Mr Ronnie Govender	

Appendix C:

Interview Transcript: Interview 32

Mr Farouk Khan

Interview 32
Date: 1 December 2000
Place: Natal Newspapers, Durban
Name: Mr Farouk Khan
Religious Affiliation: Muslim
Age: 60's
Profession: Newspaper reporter and cultural commentator
Duration of Interview: 78 minutes 4 seconds
*Bold indicates emphasis and bold and *italics* indicate extra emphasis

Aline: 'You have been a journalist for a very long time...'32.1
Farouk: 'Yes m'am for an entire generation.'32.2
Aline: 'So you must have seen a lot of changes in the community?'32.3
Farouk: 'Yes'32.4
Aline: 'What have been some of the changes that you have seen?'32.5
Farouk: 'In what period do you want to talk on? 1994?'32.6
Aline: 'Ya...'32.7
Farouk: 'Okay what you must understand that in 1994, **there has been no significant change in the Indian community because even in a democratic government the majority of Indians voted for the National Party which I thought *was absolutely sickening* and it also showed that the Indian community did not have a political moral value system in place, here was a group of people that oppressed for more than a 140 years and now when you are given freedom they enhanced and readily voted for people who virtually kept us in chins, I can't understand that and I even tried up to now to try and understand, then in the last elections the Indians did the same thing, again they voted for the National party and also for the Democratic Party, I couldn't understand why they though the future of this country is in the hands of white people *when really it was in the hands of African people*, the prejudices of the Indians is such that despite the fact that they come from 10 000 years of culture, tradition, and value-system they chose to ignore all that and put into power people form the West who had no value-system who where the *most horrendous, wicked evil people in the* world and showed scant if any respect for African culture, now I just want to point out that even before the Whites came to this country there were Indian traders along the east coast and they did business with the indigenous people in the country and *there was no difficulty*, the great maharajas from India came here to buy horses from the indigenous community to buy cattle, to buy sheep, and even the precious metals, so before the Whites came here in 1652, it was quite clear...and despite the whites coming in in 1652 the Indians that were brought in at that stage were all prisoners of war and there were very noble people, they were kings and queens and princes and princesses who refused to bow down to the Dutch East India Company and they were sent to exile in the Cape and these people were forbidden to even pray and if caught praying their throats were slit, by the Afrikaners or by the Dutch. Along slavery when 1820 comes to an end and a new system was launched called 'indentured' and the first people that fell prey to this was Indians, they came here and lived under animal-like conditions and they served these white masters which great fervour it was amazing that even when they set free they still voted for them, so you know I don't understand that and I can't explain that to you.** Take a look at the younger Indians those that are presently after 1994, that have become graduates they all seem to have become democrats and they have become **little figurines of the West, they have lost their Indian culture, they don't want to know that they are Indian they have all assumed the Western names and as far as the future goes there's not much left for Indians in this country that is for the indigenous Indians. The indigenous Indians are on their way out, as we know they will not exist beyond the next 30 years, they will be wiped out form the face of the Earth, they will not be anymore descendents of indentured Indians in this country anymore'32.8**

Aline: 'Why do you say that?'32.9

Farouk: 'They will die, they have refused to adapt...over the next thirty years all the descendents of indentured Indians **will die** because they have failed to adapt or able were able to cover niche in the future of this country, **this is by their own narrow-mindedness and I don't think that any of them cane be saved, the next thirty years they will be wiped out.** First then look at what Indian then will be allowed, right now at the moment South Africa has about 150 000 Indians who are citizenship holders of India who have come to this country to do business, they are big business people, they come form Hong Kong to escape Chinese rule, they have come from India they set up major businesses, high-tech businesses, IT businesses that kind of thing, they are know as non-resident Indians. Non-resident Indians means Indians who are not living in India and these people are a **different breed, they will work for anybody**, they set up businesses, they set up banks, sophisticated IT companies, they manufacture motor cars, they manufacture trains, they manufacture real big things, **this is the new breed of Indian that is going to come and take over.** Now if you look at them *they pray, they eat Indian food, they hold up all the cultures, the celebrate their festivals and they are more hard-working and industrious apart form being more intelligent so you are going to get a new-wave Indian, who has arrived, already the entire public health service in KwaZulu-Natal is run by doctors who are Indian citizens and not Indian South Africans. The Indian South Africans who have been here for a 140 years are coming to the end of their tenure.'32.10

Aline: Are you saying then it's all because they are refusing to be a part of the majority in this country?'32.11

Farouk: '**Yes, not that they want to be a part of the majority.** Firstly they just don't want to seem to accept that there must be a moral value system in place, I know of scores of Indian girls who are living with White men and African men outside wedlock, I got no problems with them living with White men or African men or any kind of man but at least do it through marriage so that when the children come they know who the grandparents are, they know God that's what I am saying, a lot of women think and this is strangely enough that a lot of the Indians think that they can have sex today without getting pregnant, they actually believe a thing that is safe sex, there is no such thing...break...what I am saying is that if you look at the divorce rates amongst Indians its probably the highest in the country, you look at the number of young Indians living outside wedlock, its mind blowing. You look at the number of Indian women that now have abortions, now that it is available outside marriage is staggering, the number of children who are now getting pregnant, its mind-blowing. Do you know that 5 children everyday try to commit suicide in Phoenix? They do it because they got no moral value systems, they don't know how to pray, they don't know what to clutch on, every time there is a crisis they don't know what to do, so they either try to hang themselves, slit their wrists or swallow poison, 5 kinds a day in Phoenix which has a population of 300 000 people, it must show that we are a very very sick society, so what was once this renaissance of this Indian community in the 30's and the 40's and probably even in the 50's, from the 60's we saw the Indian community die slowly and the dying process has virtually been completed by the fact that they don't even know what's good for them under any political dispensation, *you tell anybody in their clear mind will vote for the National party but the Indians did so in their tens of thousands, they actually put the National Party in a very powerful position, can you explain that?* '32.12

Aline: 'It's very interesting that they did that?'32.13

Farouk: 'Its not interesting madam, **it's a community that is dying, its kicking out, its in its death throes,** why are they so may Indian women who are battered, at one time there never was anything, how come there are so many Indian fathers abusing their little daughters, it never happened before, why is so may Indian men and women who are economically active drinking themselves to death, one of the highest killers for people under 39 is drink, there isn't a week that goes by that I don't come across a case like that, so that must make you think just what has happened to this community. Thirty years ago I suggested to the Indians take your major religions go out and spread the message amongst all people, they refused, *they insisted in living in a laager,* at one time when birth control was being encouraged for Blacks and whites were encouraged to have babies Indians themselves thought that was a great idea and actually supported that, *yet that was another wrong decision they made, you can't go on making wrong decisions and expecting to live off the fat of the land. This brings me to affirmative action, for affirmative action to work it means 33 Africans have to get a job before 1 Indian can be placed and rightly so, 33 Africans are placed and all 33 would have voted for a democratic government, so their government is in power so they should enjoy the benefits of that government, the Indians who did not see it fit to be in that government and didn't vote for the government had the audacity to claim that they have preference over jobs, they can never have a preference over a job, you must remember that once you allow yourself to do one thing that is wrong, you have lost everything. So the Indian themselves have committed intellectual suicide , they have thrown away their religion, they have thrown away their culture, they have thrown away traditions, they have thrown away their lifestyle, where did you ever see in the world*

children kicking out parents out of their homes forcing their parent to sign their homes onto their names, you tell me where do you find Indians anyway. I know of Indians who are in the United States who are staying there for thirty years, they still speak Hindi, the current Ms India who lives in the United States spoke fluently Hindi with me on Saturday night, I was staggered and stunned and then if I look at South African Indian ladies, Tamil or Telegu or Muslim can't speak any of the vernacular languages, so what do you want...'32.14

Aline : 'How did this happen in the community?, why did all of a sudden this happen?'32.15

Farouk: 'Well let us look at the Indian communities they came here with nothing to make a life for themselves. Form 1860 to the year 1900, the Indians worked themselves to the bone, by 1900 they had their own political party, they had own press, they had their own school, **40 years** then take form 1900 to 1920, the first Indian doctors emerged, the first Indian lawyers emerged, qualified teachers all of them sent abroad to study and came back even thought e Depression came in 1930, it didn't affect the Indian and the **most powerful group of people** were the Indians, all of them held jobs, all of them lived with their families, all of them lived in giant family systems, all of them prayed, the Muslims went to mosque, the Hindus went to temples, the Christians went to churches...break...1940 and there is this **major breakthrough into politics, for the first time this Indian community splits, the South African Indian Association and the South African Congress go separate ways, the Congress formed an alliance with the African National Congress, okay with the Blacks, and with the Congress of Democrats which is White, the other people under PR Pather and A.I. Kajee decided to be Indian alone so in 1940 things worked out until... Pather and Kajee tried to negotiate with the Whites whereas the other Congress movements were harassed, a lot of them were restricted, they were listed communists, but 1960 they were banned out right, the entire leadership of the Natal Indian Congress, the South African Indian Association turned course and their members became members of the South African Indian Council which was part of the apartheid system so the Indians were quite happy to carve a niche, it was in 1962 that the Indians became citizens of this country and ever since then the rot stared because they had been playing the tune of the whites and despite the warning signs and all of that kind of thing, the majority of intellectuals, the majority of Indian intellectuals of that era all went with the government, with the whites and that's why they went down the drain. Because they lost touch with their children, they lost touch with their wives they lost touch with their community, they lost touch with everybody and they had to live in little cocoons because they were hated, they were despised, they drove big government cars but with tinted windows, they couldn't go anywhere open, their families couldn't go anywhere. Rajbansi's kids were treated so shabbily, they had to be taken out and put into white schools and that's when it went down,** *1994 gave us the opportunity to correct ourselves, that was ignored and we realised then that the Indian community per se was no more...they had no future so there you are...*Indians at one time had a shop, they sold mielie-meal, tobacco this that and all kinds of things and made a living but today it's a corporate world out there, these Indians are not part of the corporate world, there might be one or two families that have got corporations but all the new wave Indians have got corporations, not one of them have a small little tiny business, all of them do business in excess of 5 million rand a year..'32.16

Aline: 'I never knew that there were, you said about 150 000 NRJ's in South Africa.'32.17

Farouk: 'Then where do you live madam? Do you know that there is a Bank of Baraoda here, to open an account there you have got to have a million rand, did you know that, believe me and they have got thousands of Indians that are clients, all are from India, there's a State Bank of India out over here, likewise, City Bank, who do you think the largest, who do you think the largest client of City bank are in South Africa, all Indians, the biggest IT company MAStech is owned by an Indian, form India. His personal worth is over 800 million dollars, the largest health care company in the United States belongs to an Indian, his personal fortune is worth 400 000 dollars you know I mean those people are unmatchable. **These people in South Africa, these Indians, sons and daughters of indentured labourers haven't got a chance I hell, to survive. '32.18**

Aline: 'This is all new information, I haven't heard all of this before.'32.19

Farouk:' Sorry to trouble you , you chose to come to me, I don't come you...'32.20

Alinw : 'I know that, I am just lost for words...'32.21

Farouk :'What did you think ?'32.22

Aline: 'Well what I thought was I never knew that there so many NRJ's in South Africa, I mean I have seen a lot of them...'32.23

Farouk: 'How many of them you think came from Hong Kong here? 50 000 Do you know the toy industry is virtually taken over by the Indians. If I take you to Chatsworth and show you the backyard shops. The biggest toy emporium is not here its in Chatsworth, did you know that and its in the backyard of a house.'32.24

Aline : 'Do you think that because of Western values...'32.25

Farouk : 'Mam these Indians have no values, look they are drinking and they are beating up their wives and having sex with their daughters, who do you call that? That's barbarism, they are monsters, they just are just plain f****** loot at it where do you see where people throw out their parents out of their parents house and take the house and take the house and out it on their name, where do you see that anywhere in the world. I come across cases like that every other day...'32.26

Aline: 'So you have lost complete faith in them?'32.27

Farouk: 'No I have lost faith in them, they are finished, they are gone, and they are dead. All I am doing is helping to build a community that has a value system, the value system that we need to put in place is simply this, that our faith must be enhanced by our efforts, our efforts must be enhanced by our faith, that's it. That is India's idea, that is how India's civilization has lasted over ten thousand years, it is that kind of effort that allowed to invent the counting system, it also led India to invent zero, the world's first university was built by Indians, the first man made lake was built by Indians.'32.28

Aline: 'So you think that we should be linking more towards India for our inspiration as South African Indians?'32.29

Farouk: 'Yes, Yes, Yes in a big way. Believe me world leaders are sitting and holding their heads, don't know what to do. I just come back yesterday from America and I was staggered to see how those Indians are fighting to keep their identities compared to us.'32.30

Aline: 'So you don't think that Indians at all are fighting to keep their identity?'32.31

Farouk:'No they don't, they are a bunch of drunken bums, nobody drinks more beer in South African than Indians per capita, did you know that? That's it, that's all these Indian men can do, sit in the bars and drink, did you know that per capita Indians drink more beer even than Blacks, did you know that?'32.32

Aline: 'No I didn't know that.'32.33

Farouk: 'Yes check it out with South African Breweries. Look at Indian businesses Indian businesses have gone bankrupt by at least 30%, right...'32.34

Aline:'So you are saying its to do with the lack of effort...'32.35

Farouk: 'Yes and they are stupid and they are losers and yet they want to live on the fat of the land, they are a terrible lot, I am telling you , they are bad news, we've been let down so badly its amazing, why has so many of our good people left our shores and are living in Australia and New Zealand and United Kingdom, I go to these places, like in America and its cold and miserable, and I ask people how could you come and live in a place like this, they say because we are safe. Safe from who?, Safe from our community. Its nice to live in a community that has self-respect, that's what they tell me.'32.36

Aline: 'So they don't that because of an ANC government in place and most of their chances of ...there's a lot of criticism from Indians that because there's and African government in place, that there's..'32.37

Farouk:'Madam don't make me laugh, under Whites Indians had nothing not even the vote. The fact that Africans have giving you the vote, shows that your positions has improved a 100%, lets understand that, you have got no reason to complain, what would I want to complain about? They told me I didn't exist but the African government tells me I exist, the fact that you and I can sit and have this conversation tells me that the Africans is a better government than the Whites ever were. The fact that my child can go to school and sit down next to any other child, the fact that my child can aspire to play for South African sport, the fact that young women can go in and know that they will not be discriminated against getting jobs, that is the South Africa that we should be playing our role in. What are you talking about? 32.38

Aline: 'This is not my viewpoint!'32.39

Farouk: 'No Indians don't have a right to complain they might be a lot wrong with an ANC government, there might be a lot wrong with it, but you can't compare them with the Nats, its chalk and cheese right so lets understand that. There many children show would have died under the Nat government but are living because the ANC government gives them free intricate operations and health care. More people now are getting equal pensions than ever before, more people now have got homes, than any other time before. More people now have got running water, more than ever before. More people have got electricity than eat any other time before. There are more buses on the road, there's more trains on the road, there's more cars on the road.'32.40

Aline: 'And yet they are still complaining?'32.41

Farouk :'About what?'32.42

Aline:' So you are saying that...32.43

Farouk: 'The Indian community of 1860 was a conscientious God-fearing community like the Romans, once they acquired some wealth, they became degenerate, they have become a bunch of drunken bums, wife-beaters and child-molesters, I am so angry you know you have no idea what this community has done to itself. I have seen them take old people and go and dump them in the Aryan Benevolent Home, because they are too much of a hindrance for them to look after, I know of young women who openly

live with men, just go the hotels and to the night clubs and see how they drink, don't you think that there's a price to be paid for this? Every civilisation that was debauched died, the Greeks, the Romans everyone of them. Just look at this throughout history, they never lasted, I mean the civilisation that produces an Aristotle gets extinct. A nation that produces Spinoza are extinct. Come and tell me, what's going, you tell me. A country that produced a Leonardo da Vinci, the first doctor, the first man that thought of an aeroplane was a genius, a super-intellectual, extinct. You tell me, and what does this world vy for. They vy forth Nobel Prize, do you know who founded the Nobel Prize, it as a man called Alfred Nobel, his family hated him so much, because he was such a rubbish man, and they all left him. He was left alone with his money so he's now giving it away as peace prizes. Do you know how he mad his money? He invented dynamite even worst he invented the fuse of that dynamite. Dynamite has killed more people than anybody else and yet you get Tutu and Mandela and all these people want the Nobel Peace Prize, where is the value system here? I am just pointing it out to you that people have lost their moral values and we speaking specifically in your case about Indians who say we can't get jobs because of affirmative action, they don't deserve the jobs in the first place.'32.44

Aline: I mean but how can you say that they don't deserve their jobs, in terms of survival, there are a lot I poor Indians at the moment?'32.45

Farouk: 'No Indian has the right to be poor, if anybody has earned a job they have a right to keep it, would you accept that and in the job you would work to the best of your ability, with total honesty at the same token you would look after you family ensure that they have the basic human rights, food, shelter, clothing and medical care and that kind of thing. Presently at one time 80% of the community provided its own, today we are lucky if 20% of that community provided for the Indian community and that is mot because people are born poor, its just because they have taken another route. Indians don't help anybody, not even themselves anymore and what I am telling you is a very serious situation that I see everyday, you have no idea the kind of horrific, situations that our children go through inflicted upon them by their parents which never happened. There are children who beat up their parents like you have seen before, you would want to die just looking at these elderly figures, all battered and bruised, broken noses, broken jaws, broken hands...'32.46

Aline: 'But do think that is as a result of the stress you know being...'32.47

Farouk: 'Mam, what stress, you know your father as not been responsible for your unhappy situation, you must know that when you drink, you lose ...you must know that it will affect your liver, you smoke, you know your lungs get all bunged up. You do all these nasty things, let me just point out something...In KwaZulu-Natal the Lotto loses money everywhere except in Chatsworth and Phoenix. The biggest gamblers are Indians, did you know that? I was staggered that I heard that the Lotto people return major profit in these two areas, now if Indians have got such a bad life, and they are so poor, where do they get this money from to gamble, going to the race courses and you will find 20 000 Indians there every Saturday, where do they get this money from to gamble, why are the bars and bottle stores doing such thriving business from Indians? South African Breweries will you that per capita more Indians drink beer than any other race group in this country, doesn't that tell you something? When it comes to drinking, when it come to gambling, when it comes to fornicating, it seems that we are the number one, you go out to the ...Indian women that are prostitutes, not just Indian women but children, and Indian women are forcing their children onto the streets, are you aware of that? Do you still think there is a future for this community? How old are you now?'32.48

Aline: '25'32.49

Farouk:'Well you are going to live through it and you will probably tell me, twenty years form now that this is a very unhappy situation, at one time we were model community. There is a joke going around, they said when Indians came to this country,they came to cut grass and grow cane, now the drink the cane and smoke the grass, isn't that an indictment on us? '32.50

Aline: 'So you don't think...say for instance there are more links with India now, it that in some way not creating a sense of more Indianness amongst Indians?'

Farouk :'Well I don't know we are trying very hard, ten years ago we have launched a number of programmes and we sent many young people out there, we run the Miss India pageant which is based on the Indian performing arts, we do so many things, we are increasing that Indian festival to be observed publicly. This year we had the Divali celebrations, we had the Festival of the Chariots, we are trying as much as we possibly can to make, we are trying to invite more Indian musicians, dancers to come here, run workshops and that kind of thing to try and put it together, whether we are successful or not I don't know, and you know that movement has started ten years ago.'32.51

Aline: 'Is the movement growing?'32.52

Farouk:'Ya the movement is growing, but how far we are going to go I don't know...These are ordinary men and women who are concerned about the community I am one of those people, we have different organisations, that are running it. You take for instance the Aryan Benevolent home they...Culture India Pageant has opened up, dance schools, music lessons, language, I myself put up prize money to encourage

debate in Hindi, poetry in Urdu and the Tamil language to be spoken, you know there is many people like us that are trying but I don't think that we are going to have the desired results unless they very young children are made available to this and the parents, the father and the mother re working, they don't do nothing, the put the child in a crèche, from the crèche into school, into school into the play area and then home. Saturday and Sunday the parents are there the parents are too busy cleaning their houses, to worry about their kinds. Every Indian home now wants two cars.'32.53

Aline: 'So you think that we are becoming a greedy society?'32.54

Farouk: 'Well everything that is bad, we have become, I don't think that we are going to come right.'32.55

Aline: 'So you think that the majority of the Indians don't see themselves as being South African anymore?'32.56

Farouk: 'They look themselves as South Africans, but as South Africans who are biases of partial to whites because they think that whites are superior.'32.57

Aline:' Well obviously that has come from many years being under apartheid and so on.'32.58

Farouk: ' Mam I come from that school, you come that school, many others do we know that that is a myth, they haven't been able to put me down, they haven't been able to put you down. So those people that put down allow themselves to be put down, the others who made a lot of money out of it.'32.59

Aline: 'There was a lot in the newspaper about whether Indians were South African Indian or Indian South African, or South Africa?'32.60

Farouk: 'We are South Africans of Indian origin, there are no two ways about that, as such our language does not belong to African but we are very pleased to share it with them, our dance, our music is not African but we are ready to share it with them in fact we would even fuse it with them. We have got something to give to Africa, give to Africa which is priceless and we should be prepared to accept from Africans that which is priceless too, this is what we are not doing. We don't want to give and we don't want to take, whereas Non-resident Indians are only too pleased to give their religion, they are to pleased to give their culture, too pleased to give their food to anybody who wants it, why are we so selfish?'32.61**

Aline: 'I am referring now to the Ilanga newspaper editorial, do you think that described relations between Indians and Africans?'32.62

Farouk : ' Well look, no I don't think that was right, I think those guys went overboard over there, but what **I do think there are many Africans who dislike Indians because of Indians continually siding with Whites,** that's there I know it and rightly so. Because Whites even tell the Africans, look we would like to give you more but we would have to give the Indians more than you. So they to have been fermenting that. So there you are , you must remember you will always get those non-achievers in the African community who will want to have a go at Indians, because they think that we are weaker.'32.63

Aline: 'Then what did you think about the conference that was held?'32.64

Farouk: 'I don't know I wasn't there. I did not attend that conference I don't know what they said but let me tell you this much, **I am Indian and I think Indian, okay. There are not many like me, that is Indian and thinks Indians there are many who are Indian but they think they are Whites.'32.65**

Aline: 'What do you think makes you Indian?'32.66

Farouk: '**That I have the ability to share my culture, my tradition and my religion with those who do no have it.'32.67**

Aline:' What did you think about the Indian languages Department closing down?'32.67

Farouk: 'I am very upset about it, as a matter of fact w are trying to do something. There's a two part series coming up, next maybe you should look at it I wrote half of it, about 2000 words of it. We are calling, I personally with a group of people are calling for a language protector like you have the public protector, to protect Indian languages because I believe that we have got something to give, because we have got universities in India that can take thousands of Africans and it will benefit them if they can speak Hindi or Tamil or whatever because then education for them is available. Degrees that they can get at, the language is preventing them from going to India and studying. **Africa has got a treasure chest in India and all they have to learn one language, one Indian language and he way is open, nothing is stopping them from becoming doctors, right.'32.68**

Aline: 'What do you think about the VHP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad?'32.69

Farouk: 'Look they opened up as what they termed to be a very right-wing anti-Muslim group but I have had very close contact with them and I have found out that they have many good moves, very pragmatic moves and I found out that they are not anti-Muslim but I also think that they have very strong points that they made, like Congress saw it fit to give Muslims extra privileges and not the Hindus, but that is stupid, why do you want to give a minority group extra privileges and not the main rank and file, like a Muslim can have more than one wife, a Hindu man can't that is stupid. I mean Congress only gave that concession to Muslims to keep them in their minority status place and prevented them from being integrated into the mainstream life, the BJP said listen brazo if you want to be part of the mainstream community, then you work with us. And if

you breakdown our temples, we will go and break down your mosque because we will teach you that, maybe that might ton be the best way to look at things, but look at the BJP since they have come into power, look at the developments, if you look at the business I mean India is the fifth most industrialised country in the world, the Muslims over there have stopped making nonsense and there is no uprising there with them or the Sikhs or any other extremist group. I also believe that Pakistan has no right to exist, Pakistan should be re-incorporated into India and then we won't have a Kashmiri border dispute. Bangladesh and Pakistan are India, finished period, there is no argument on that. it was only made into a separate terms to suit some people little political agenda but that is it, does that answer your question.'32.70

Aline: 'But the VHP in South African in the moment, you are saying that…'32.71

Farouk: 'What VHP in South Africa what do you mean?'32.72

Aline: 'The organisation…'32.73

Farouk: '**I have got no problems with them no matter where they are in the world. No matter how you look at it, they all know that they are controlled by Raja Yoga the law of retribution, that keeps them in their place**'32.74

Aline: 'Do you think that now there are more networking amongst South African Indians and Indians within the diaspora?'32.75

Farouk :'**There is no Indian diaspora, diaspora means that you have been thrown out of you r land and you are scattered, we have never been thrown out of our land, although people have invaded our land, so we belong to a worldwide community and we went there on our own accord, nobody forced us. Diaspora is when you are forced out. Yes there is networking around the world and I am very much involved in that networking as well because I believe that is the way forward.'32.76**

Aline :So you see Indians throughout the world perhaps strengthening their ties with each other?'32.77

Farouk: ' **Yes because never again will there be another Idi Amin, never again will any president of the United States ever be in a position to threaten India. There will never be any dictator anywhere in the world who can expel Indians on such large numbers on the way that it was done in Africa, no longer will Indians be dispossessed like they have been in the past, and that is because of a strong worldwide community.'32.78**

Aline: 'How do you think that this strong worldwide community is growing, is it along the lines of culture, religion, business?'32.79

Farouk: ' Well I think its based on the lines of excellence, the man who fires out the space shuttle is an Indian, the man who opens the door at the United Nations is an Indian, the man who runs the International Monetary Fund is an Indian, all major doctors who are teaching in Western hospitals not all but a lot of doctors who have to the top positions in hospitals around the western world are Indian so its quite clear to me that this networking is based on the pursuit of excellence. The Ms India Worldwide Pageant was held on Saturday night in Miami, the girl from the United States won, Malaysia came second and India came third. Last night Ms India became Ms World, this is the third time in row for a Ms India, just shows you **the power of our networking, when it comes to IT, in Silicon Valley the five top people, five multi-billionaires are all Indian so it's the pursuit of excellence, not anything else.'32.80**

Aline: 'So do you see perhaps organisations growing that are building on this strengthening of ties?'32.81

Farouk: 'What organisations…I don't think that GOPIO is going to succeed. I don't think that their views are constant enough, there is too much of chopping and changing of attitude and they are too scared and frightened because I saw them I listened to them. I even spoke at their conferences, they tread very softly so I don't know if GOPIO is going to be awright. Look I work with many organisations, Indian organisations and I know we are getting there, I don't know about GOPIO. I work with the India Festival Committee form New York, I work with the Indian Association in Britain, I work with the World Federation of Indian journalists, I work with various there are too many to mention but let me put it to you in this way, on any given day I get phone calls from Indians around the world asking for advice or wanting to do things or wanting to network that will tell you.'32.82

Aline: 'What do you feel that Indians feel that they have in common with perhaps Indians from India?'32.83

Farouk :'Well what we had in common, very simply was religion. Because we firstly we had a history, a heritage, then of course religion, traditions, traditions like celebrations and things like that. Of course religion was always there, a part of it. But what we don't have what the Indians have, **the Indians have an amazing resolution to pursue that which is excellent**, we don't. **You know everybody has a good quality of life, but these Indians in India have a texture to this quality, that makes it extra special, its amazing, they are a proud people, they put a premium on themselves, they just don't allow themselves to be tainted like we do.'32.84**

Aline: 'What do you think that Indians have in common with Black South Africans?'32.85

Farouk: 'I think that the biggest thing that we have in common with them is that we know that they are travellers on the same, sea. No matter how you look at it we are all God's creations and no matter where our journey takes us we are all going to end in the same place so we have one creator so since we are travelling in

the same seas, we look at what they can offer us and what we can offer them. No its not like an ideal, it is. **And weave always, India has always offered Africa but never colonised, All Indians India especially believe that it has an obligation to Africa and as such has been making a contribution. Indian doctors run Mozambique, Indian doctors run South Africa, Indian scientists are building dams, growing food in most of Africa. So Indians are playing a role where they see that it is their fortune to serve Africa.'32.86**

Aline: 'What do you think that Indians feel they have in common with white South Africans?'32.87

Farouk:'I just want to be very careful, when I talk about Indians, South African Indians...**what they have in common is that these people think that whites have a foolproof society**

And that they could enjoy security in that society, they have nothing in common with them but for some reason or the other, the son and daughters of indentured labourers believe that they are born to serve whites and that they should be subservient to whites.'32.88

Aline :'Do you want to add anything?'32.89

Appendix D:

Questionnaire Template

Questionnaire Template: Indians in the New South Africa

Introduction

I am a Master of Arts student in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Natal, Durban. The title of my dissertation is:

"The Struggle to be South African": Cultural Politics in Durban – Contesting Indian identity in the Public Sphere.

I appreciate the time that you are taking to answer this questionnaire. Please note that your responses to this questionnaire will be treated as **confidential** and **anonymous**.

Please indicate the relevant response with a tick and where applicable with space provided provide a brief summary of your response.

---

1) Which age group do you fall in?

Age Group	
18-29	
30-39	
40-49	
50-59	
60>	

2) What religion do you belong to?

Religion	
Muslim	
Hindu	
Christian	
Other	

3) How important is religion in your life?

Not so important	
Important	
Very Important	

Extemely Important	

4) **In terms of language dominance, what language do you speak and with what proportion?**

English Only	
English and Vernacular Language, Same Proportion	
English and Vernacular Language, English dominant	
English and Tamil, Tamil dominant	
English and Hindi, Hindi dominant	
English and Gujerati, Gujerati dominant	
English and Urdu, Urdu dominant	
Others (Mehmon, Konkani)	

5) **How would you best describe yourself?**

South African Indian Origin	
South African Indian	
South African	
South African Hindu	
South African Muslim	
South African Indian Muslim	
South African Christian	
Indian of South African Origin	
Indian South African	
Other	

6) **What would want to leave South Africa, if so why? (State briefly)**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7) **If you had to emigrate, which country would you want to emigrate to?**

United Kingdom	
India	
Australia	
Other (State country)	

8) **Which cricket team do you support in general?**

India	
South Africa	

9) **If both these teams were playing against each other, which team would you support?**

India	
South Africa	

9a) **Briefly state the reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10) **Which radio station do you listen to the most?**

East Coast Radio	
Five FM	
Radio Lotus	
Radio Hindvani	
Radio Phoenix	
Other (Please state)	

11) **Do you feel at home in the new South Africa?** (Please state your response briefly)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for being part of this questionnaire.

Appendix E:

Website Screenshots
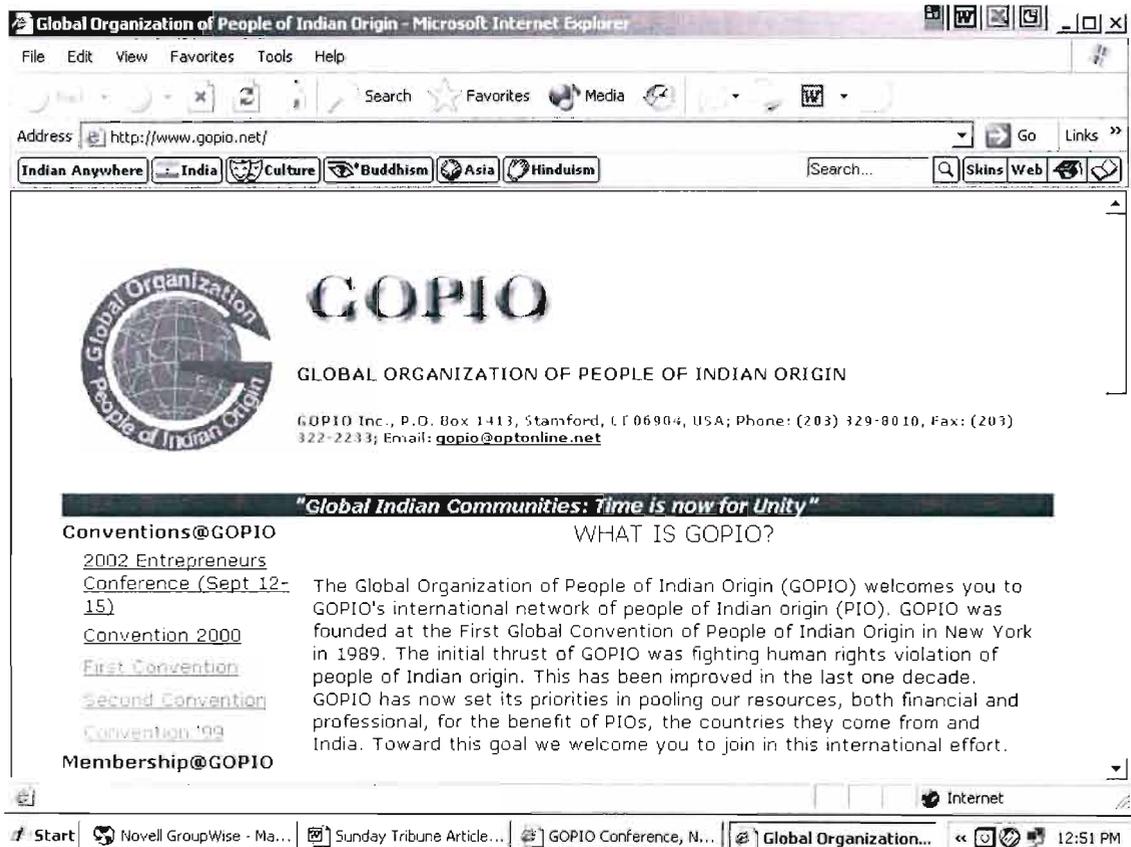
Figure 1: Screenshot of GOPIO

Figure 2: Screenshot of Global Vishwa Hindu Parishad
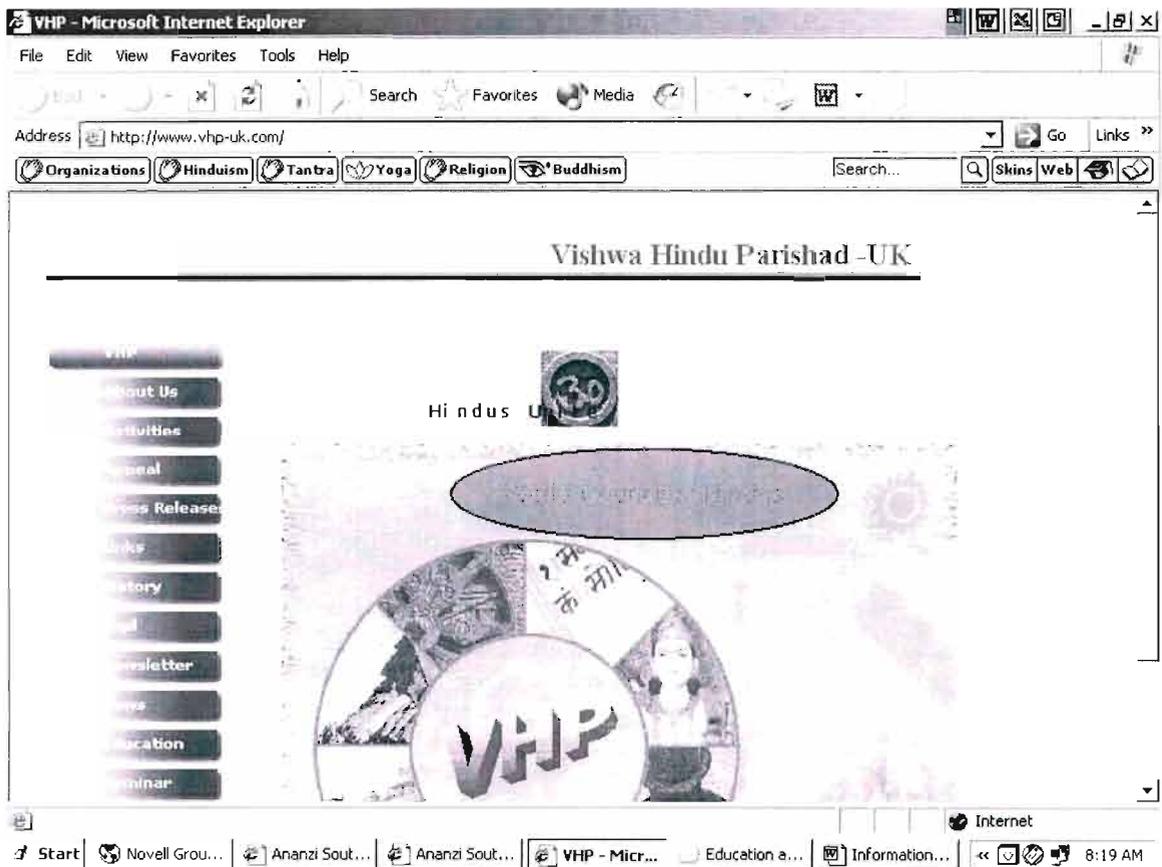
Figure 3: Screenshot of Global Vishwa Hindu Parishad - UK

Figure 4: Vishwa Shakti, The Hindu Newspaper
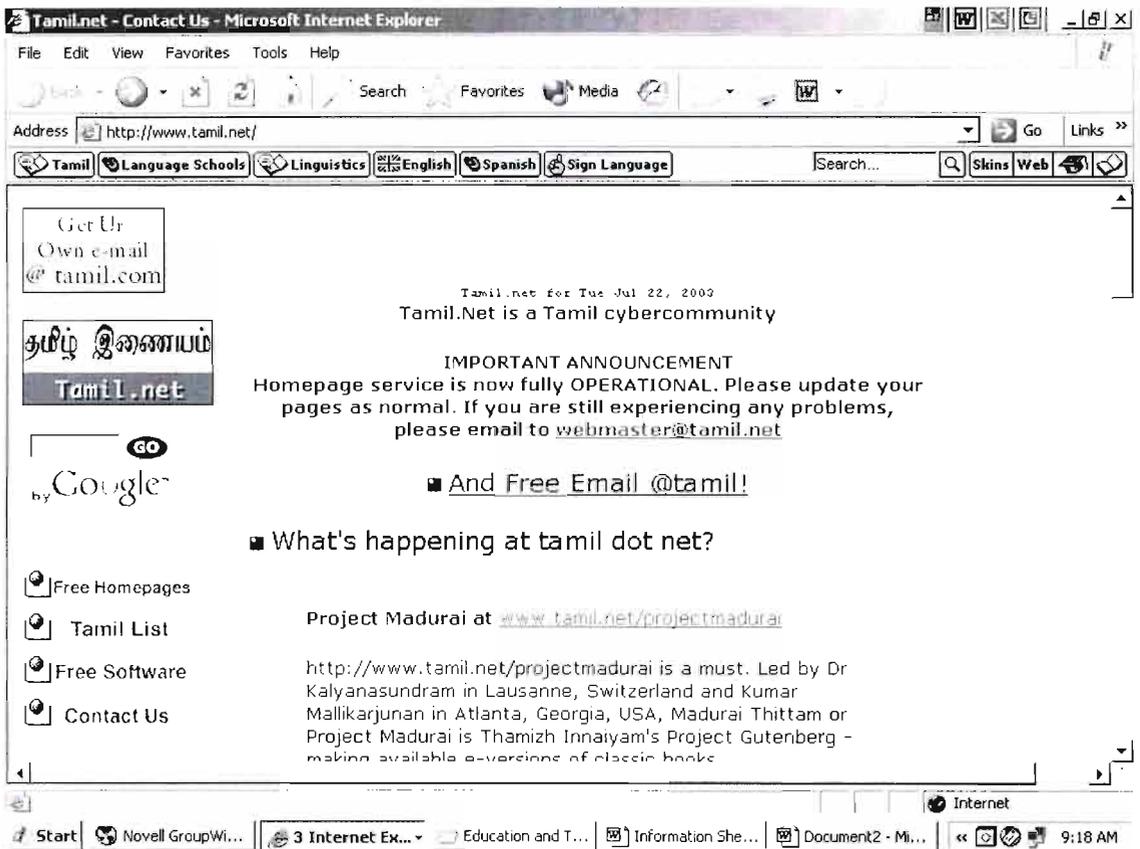
Figure 5 : Screenshot Tamil dot net
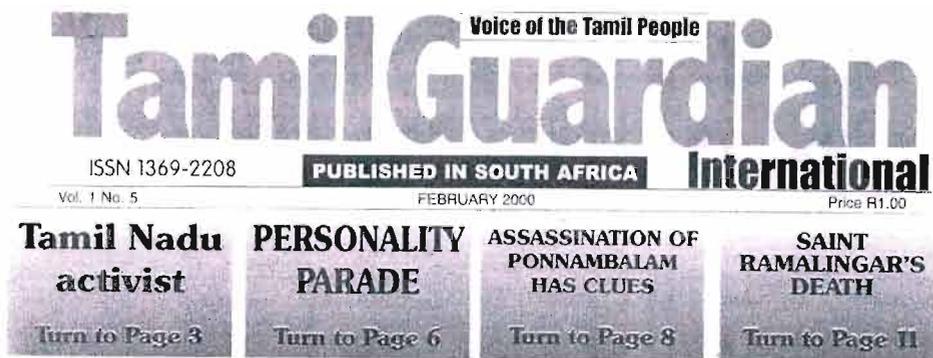
Figure 6: Tamil Guardian- South Africa
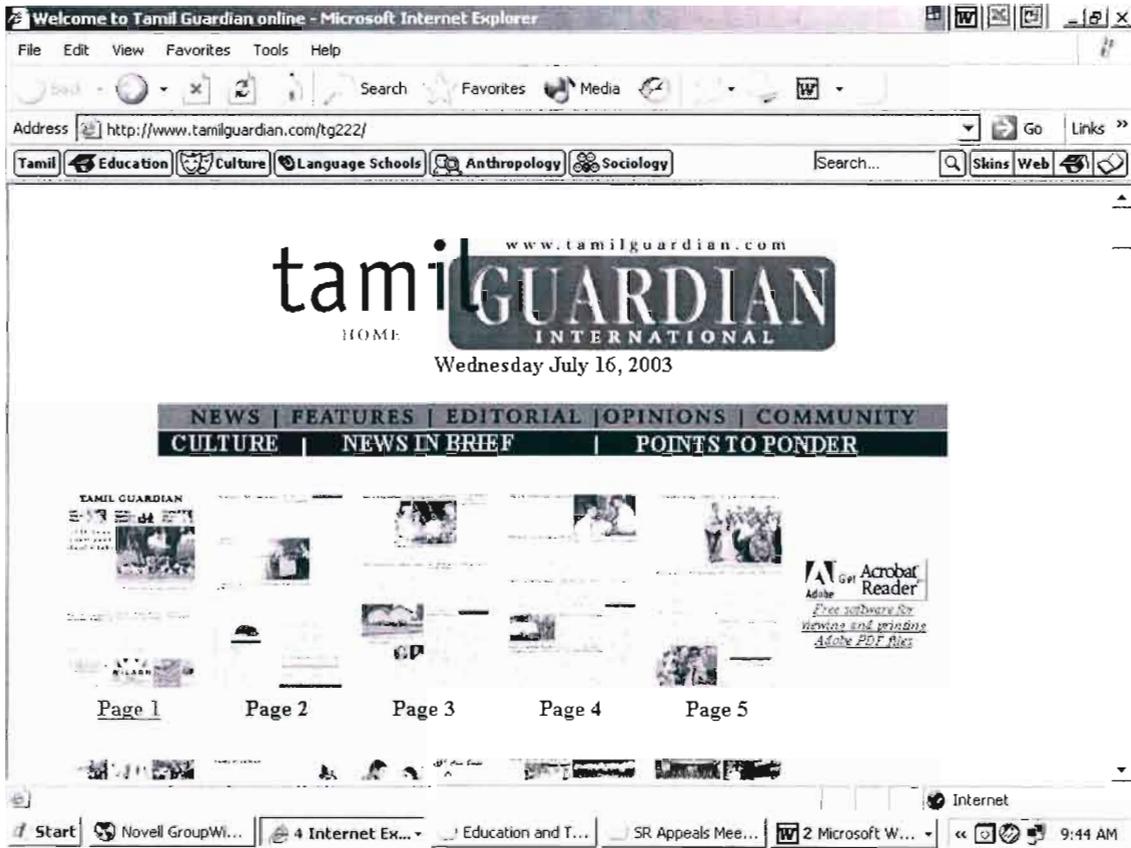
Figure 7: Screenshot Tamil Guardian International

Appendix F

Eastern Languages Action Committee

INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA

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1. PREAMBLE

This document is submitted by the Institute of Indian Languages on behalf of its affiliates all of whom represent loyal citizens of the new democratic South Africa, and whose sole purpose is to be an integral part of the growth and development of our new, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Indian Languages is a national body that has as its affiliates national and provincial bodies of the different Indian linguistic groups, viz:

2.1 Arabic, (Arabic Study Circle);
2.2. Gujarati, (South African Gujarati Maha Parishad);
2.3. Hindi, (Hindi Shiksha Sangh of South Africa);
2.4.Tamil, (South African Tamil Federation) ;
2.5.Telugu, (Andhra Maha Sabha);
2.6.Sanskrit, (Univ. of Durban-Westville);
2.7.Urdu, (Buzme Adab of South Africa).

3. HISTORY OF INDIAN LANGUAGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The beginning of the history of Indians in South Africa is synonymous with the introduction of indentured labour by the British imperialists in South Africa. However, after the period of indenture was over, some Indians elected to remain in South Africa. This proved a threat to white traders and an urgent need developed to repatriate the Indians . An aggressive process of " de-Indianization" was launched with Indians being forced to adopt the English code of dress, mannerisms and speech. Mother-tongue education was effectively totally and deliberately ignored.

Since 1948 the problem of mother-tongue education was accentuated with the introduction of Afrikaans - a language that Indians were not exposed to at all, particularly in Natal- as the second compulsory official language both at primary and secondary schools..

1

Eastern languages were offered at secondary schools only in 1977, and in primary schools in 1984. However, their progress was retarded as there were few qualified teachers available and no attempts were made to train such teachers at the colleges of education. Even when the University of Durban-Westville, the only institution in the country that provides teacher-training courses in the Eastern Languages, qualified teachers with post-graduate degrees and diplomas, the relevant education department and principals did not use their expertise.

It must be noted that many principals did not wish to offend their Afrikaner superiors by introducing the Eastern languages in their schools and those schools that did offer the languages had little to show for their efforts because of the indifferent, intolerant and unsupportive attitude by those in positions of power. It must be noted though, there were exceptions to this attitude.

As a result of this, the vital task of maintenance and promotion of the Eastern languages had become the responsibility of community bodies, (listed in Introduction), at the expense of the communities themselves, with the Institute of Indian Languages playing a vital role as a co-ordinating forum.

3. CURRENT PROBLEMS

In this vibrant, new-found democracy in South Africa , we perceived that the new government would give the Eastern languages the respect and attention it deserved. Provisions of the interim constitutions also raised hopes that these languages, instead of being ignored ,will be allowed to flourish and develop alongside the eleven official languages.

However the current position is cause for great concern. Presently some schools, especially those that were under the supervision of H.O.D.in KwaZulu-Natal are exercising a three language formula. This formula reads as follows:
English   1ST LANGUAGE
Afrikaans   2ND LANGUAGE
Eastern Languages / Zulu   3RD LANGUAGE

While the principle of the proposed three-language is acceptable, we find the format unacceptable and problematic. Our reasons are as follows:

1. The status of Afrikaans as a compulsory language for non-Afrikaans speaking communities remains.

2. We maintain that it is absolutely necessary for our children to learn and be proficient in an African language as we perceive it to be an essential part of building a South African nation and culture. In addition, language can be used as a powerful medium of uniting people, provided the choice of language is a fair one.

3. According to circulars received at schools, second language syllabi are only available in Afrikaans and English. Thus only these languages can be learnt at second language level.

4. As a consequence of this, Zulu cannot be taken at the second language level. But, however, the syllabus for Zulu as a third language

2

does exist. Thus Zulu can and will be offered as a third language. Subsequently, students will have to make a choice between Zulu and an Eastern language. This is obviously a grossly unfair choice. One cannot help but wonder whether this is a premeditated ploy to retain the status quo of Afrikaans and delete the Eastern Languages from the school curriculum, as Zulu will rightly demand its place in the curriculum. No reason is provided as to why the Zulu second language syllabus has not been prepared. We have also been informed that it can take as many as four years for a syllabus to be approved. This in effect means that the life-span of Afrikaans will remain indefinite.

Further, in the absence of a sufficient number of suitably qualified teachers, part-time teachers from the community with language know-how had been selected to tutor students in the mother-tongue. The ex-HOD had availed an amount of six million rand in order to facilitate teaching in the mother-tongue.
It has been revealed that this amount soon will no longer be available. This sounds the death-knell for Eastern languages.

The aforementioned goes clearly against the NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY BILL which reads as follows:

"Directive principles of national education policy.
   4. The policy contemplated in section shall be directed toward-
   (a) The advancement and protection of the fundamental rights of every person guaranteed in terms of Chapter 3 of the Constitution, and in terms of international conventions ratified by Parliament , and in particular the right--
      (i) of every person to be protected against unfair discrimination within an education department or education institution on any
         ground whatsoever;
      (viii) of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution;

   (c) achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in education provision. "

4.   OUR REQUESTS

In view of the inequalities that the Indians have been subjected to, and the provisions made by the Constitution and the aforementioned Education Policy Bill with regards to equality, we request the following:

1. That a public statement be made by the National Minister of Education announcing that Eastern languages are part of the school curriculum and must be afforded the same respect as all other languages in school.

2. That Afrikaans as a compulsory second language in schools where it serves no purpose, be removed.

3. That Eastern languages, together with the languages of other minority groups, be offered as fully- fledged examination subjects in their own right, as present time

allocation of one and a half hours is insufficient in accommodating these subjects as examination subjects.

4. That in view of the fact that Eastern languages fall in the category of minority languages, the expected number per class unit not be in accordance with that of the official compulsory languages.

5. That there should not be a bias towards modern -European languages when determining policies on minority languages, as these communities have always had an advantage over Indians by virtue of the colour of their skins.

6. That the services of part-time teachers must be respected and retained as they provided an invaluable service in the absence of qualified personnel.

7. That Indian Languages be introduced at teacher-training institutions to alleviate the problem of insufficient numbers of suitably qualified teachers.

8. That people appointed to serve in government structures to facilitate the implementation of Eastern languages I minority languages, be suitably qualified and have a sufficient interest in the maintenance of these languages.

9. That Eastern languages not be offered as an option to an official language.

10. That the Pan South African Language Board accommodate a representative from the Eastern languages.

5.   CONCLUSION

We trust that our recommendations on Eastern languages will be seriously considered and that the appropriate action will be taken to ensure that the language needs of the South African of Indian origin are not neglected. May we add that we have been making submissions on the issues discussed above from last year, but apart from an acknowledgement of our letters, we have had no response. We trust that the authorities will deal with this submission with the gravity required at this critical juncture in our country's history. Included in this document is a copy of the memorandum sent in October 1994 to the National and Provincial ministers of education. If any clarity on the issue of Eastern Languages is needed, we will make ourselves available for an interview.

May all the languages in our beautiful country prosper.

Executive of the Institute of Indian Languages

1. Chairman	Dr. R. HEMRAJ (Hindi Shiksha Sangh)
2. Vice- Chairman	Mr. P.I.Devan
3. Secretary	Ms. V.Lutchman
4. Treasurer	Mr. P.V. Lakhani (Maha Gujarati Parishad of South Africa)
5. Mr. V.K.Naidoo	Andhra Maha Sabha of South Africa
6. Dr O. Archary	South African Tamil Federation
7. Mr S Saddiqi	Buze Adab of South Africa and Arabic Study Circle
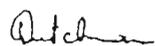
V. LUTCHMAN (MS)
SECRETARY

4

INSTITUTE
OF INDIAN (EASTERN)
LANGUAGES

ADHOC COMMITTEE'S REPORT

7 December 1994

The Committee for Marginalised Languages and the Indian Minority Languages Committee constituted this group.

Although discussions proceeded with the view that both sets of languages are in the same predicament, for clarity it was accepted that

i) Marginalised languages are those African languages enjoying official languages status in the constitution, yet not receiving the recognition and support of state structures viz.: Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Isindebele and Siswati (6.1 of Ch 1 of Act 108 of 1996).

ii) Minority languages refer to the Eastern/Indian languages mentioned in 5(b) (i) and (ii) of the Constitution (Ch. 1 of Act 108 of 1996), which have speech communities in Republic of South Africa. The discussion then proceeded according to the following structure: (1) identify issues (2) suggest possible solutions and strategies and (3) propose action plans to PANSALB.

1. THE ISSUES

The marginalised languages mentioned above are in the ironical situation of being official languages yet marginalised as a result of the dominance of English in all spheres of life in South Africa. There is no incentive for the study of African languages, particularly in the context of globalization. Even the state broadcaster SABC TV does not fulfill the needs of the various African languages vis-a-vis programmes, news etc. in these languages. The foregoing is resulting in a drift away from these languages.

The minority language speech communities such as Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati and Urdu are also subjected to the dominance of English, (and also Afrikaans in KZN), where choice of the Indian languages in schools is limited because of the presence of three official languages viz. English, Afrikaans and isiZulu in the curriculum. Hence these languages, which have very large members of speakers (almost all above 40 million) worldwide, are relegated to minority language status in the Republic of South Africa.

2. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

In order to empower the African languages (official languages) it was felt that strategies ought to be applied for the gradual diminution of the dominance or hegemony of English. Appropriate use of the African languages could prevent their marginalisation by English. The state should provide resources for the use of these languages. Official documents should use these official African languages, at least in summaries of the contents in the marginalised languages. Translation and interpretation services in these languages must be

freely available. The conscientization of different speech communities and their awareness of language rights could create an environment which will benefit these languages. This awareness would also lead to the demand for incentives to study and promote the African languages.

It was also agreed that the SABC must provide the public with a time-frame and firm commitment for the full and proper airing of the African languages. Statistics with regard to viewership/listenership acquired through a properly worded population census questionnaire eliciting information about heritage/ethnic mother tongue languages should form the basis of decisions by state organs with regard to language policy.

The educational system must provide for the offering of an African language as second official language.

The private sector could also be required to use marginalised languages in their advertisements, packaging of goods etc. which could reflect the language of the region where these are marketed.

Other avenues to inspire people towards studying African languages were also explored, such as Olympiads and special examinations to assist evaluation of learners' abilities.

The state could reinforce language awareness on a regional basis by using the languages in the areas where such speech communities reside, for official communication.

The foregoing strategies for promoting the marginalised languages could be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the minority languages.

The discussions on Language in Education Policy included marginalised and minority languages. The need for exposure to the Ethnic mother-tongue at school was regarded as paramount, including such exposure for learners in areas away from the indigenous EMT location. The state at central and provincial levels must provide resources and devise policies consonant with the promotion of these marginalised and minority languages. For the marginalised languages, the state could make a "regional" African language compulsory in the school curriculum. With regard to the minority languages, the curriculum could be adapted to the three language formula with a mother tongue language as a fully fledged part of the curriculum. Such recognition of minority languages, when offered as an unfettered choice in the school curriculum, would enhance its status and appeal to the speech communities they represent.

Furthermore, it was agreed that "Model C" schools must be encouraged to offer marginalised and minority languages.

3. ACTION PLANS FOR PANSALB

The group was appreciative of the fact that PANSALB, created under our Democratic Constitution, would make every possible effort to empower hitherto neglected languages spoken in our country.

In this regard the group would like to urge PANSALB to move Government at all levels to give serious consideration to the deteriorating situation vis-a-vis marginalised and minority languages.

PANSALB must undertake appropriate interventions on behalf of marginalised and minority languages, offering solutions at national and regional levels to facilitate the teaching and learning of those languages. Considerations such as class size, economic viability etc. must be weighed against the demands for cultural empowerment. PANSALB must set time frames for the use of the marginalised languages as medium of instruction wherever required or considered appropriate.

PANSALB should initiate a campaign of conscientising the people, and solicit aid of grass-roots structures, teachers and teachers' organisations to return the languages to the people.

PANSALB must also approach the state for funds for Language Capacity Building which could be accessed by state and private organisations for the purpose of language empowerment. As part of Regional interventions/solutions, PANSALB must try to wield its influence over government and educational institutions to maintain the teaching of minority languages where the demographics illustrate the need for these languages at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

In calling upon PANSALB to help translate the various rights in our Constitution into reality, the group realises that various organs of state, as well as formal structures for addressing specific issues, will need to be created. In this regard two such structures were identified as requiring immediate attention.

1) Provincial Language Commissions (where they do not exist yet).
2) National Language Boards for the minority languages viz. Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati and Urdu.

Report prepared by
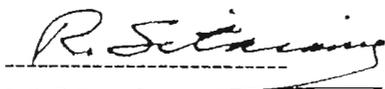
PROF R SITARAM
CENTRE FOR LANGUAGES - HOD INDIAN LANGUAGES 1977-1998
UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

University of Natal Language Survey
Students' Interest to take Arabic and Urdu
In 1999

18%

82%

■ Yes

■ No
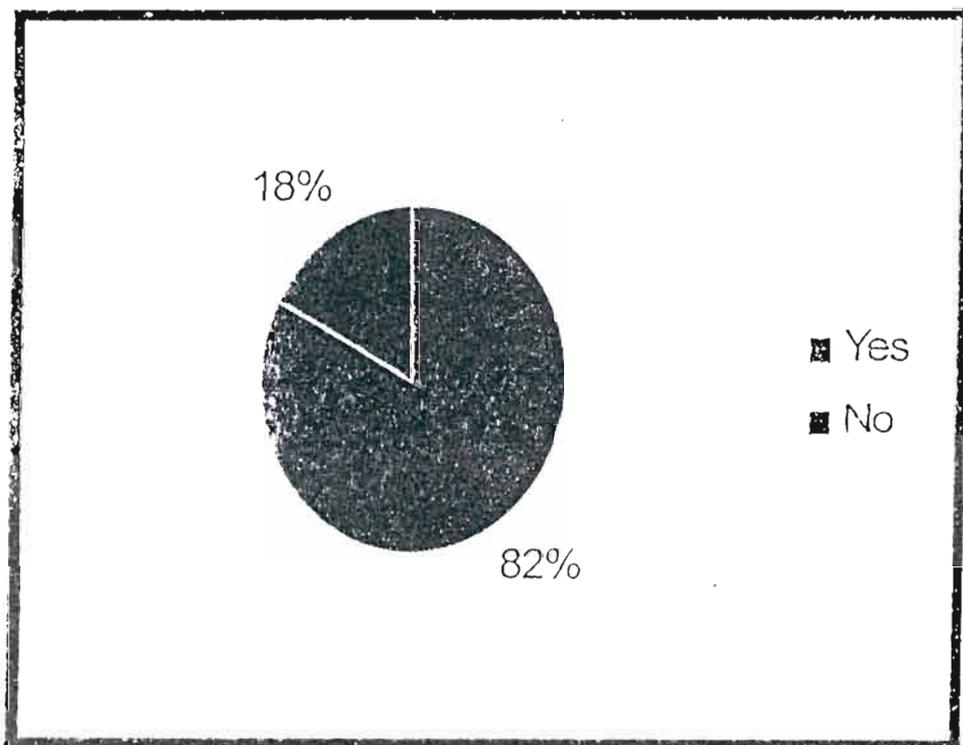
Sample size = 74

Yes = 61
No = 13

Survey Conducted by Dr. Ayoob Jadwat
March 1997

University of Natal Language Survey Students' Interest to take Indian Languages in 1999

Sample size = 448

Key to subjects:

1. Sanskrit
2. Hindi
3. Tamil
4. Telugu
5. Gujarati
6. Hindu Studies
7. Indian Culture
8. Indo-African Studies

INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES & CULTURE
Incorporating
Arabic * Gujarati * Hindi * Sanskrit * Tamil * Telugu * Urdu

University of Durban-Westville, Private Bag X54001   Tel ; (031) 8202533 (O), 5778252 (H)

Dr G.K. Nair
Head : Education Agency
Department of Education & Culture
KwaZulu-Natal

Sir

Indian Languages in Schools

There is great concern among members of the Indian community that Indian languages might be phased out from the school curriculum. A number of factors have contributed to this perception. I trust that you will assure us that the fears of the community are groundless.

The Institute respectfully submits the following as issues which need your urgent and sympathetic consideration :

1. Absence of Written Directives to Principals with respect to the offering of Indian Languages in your schools

In the absence of any written directive from your office a number of principals are exercising their own discretion in interpreting aspects of the curriculum guideline in their possession. It is most disturbing that there appears to be no consistency from school to school. A written directive is urgently needed to prevent confusion.

2. Minimum numbers required for a class to be offered

(a) We understand that, for Indian languages, the minimum number required to offer a class in any standard is 20. Confirmation of this is requested. If this new minimum requirement formula is enforced then some of the Indian languages will disappear from the school curriculum with immediate effect while the other Indian languages will suffer the same fate in the not too distant future.

We believe that to increase the minimum number from "8" to "20" is grossly unfair. Furthermore, depriving more than 10,000 pupils of the opportunity to study their respective languages is totally against the grain of our new democracy. It is also unjustifiable and unconstitutional.

The Institute requests that the question of minimum numbers be addressed anew and that it be done with an understanding of the needs of the community. It is suggested that community-based organisations should be invited to any such discussion. The Institute will be most willing to offer its services in this regard.

Continued

At the end of last year, about the time of completion of SPTT's work the National Minister of Education announced his intention to reconfigure higher education and appointed a task team to look into the national size and shape of higher education. Being a member of the task team I realized the seriousness and its implications for UDW. I realized that we had to reposition UDW in such a way that ensured that **it remained a research university**. At the first meeting with deans, members of Manco and Professor Kambuwa I raised this issue and this meeting agreed to task Prof. McCarthy (convener), Ms. Vaughan and Mr. Prem Naidoo to write a discussion paper on repositioning UDW. This paper was developed and discussed within the Manco and the deans. It was decided to send it to all faculties for discussion and hence special faculty boards were convened. I asked for comment that will be integrated into the document by the original authors of the document. Thereafter, it will be tabled at senate, university planning committee and institutional forum. I hope that the process will be taken forward by the university planning committee.

I gave you this background so as to clarify any misunderstandings. I want to address four issues:

1. There should be a relationship between the repositioning of UDW and the national size and shape exercise. As I indicated in my speech at the beginning of the academic year that in repositioning UDW we need to take cognizance of what is happening outside the university and what our internal capabilities are. The national size and shape exercise is significant and will determine the size and shape of all higher education institutions in the country. UDW will not be immune to this exercise. We can determine our own size and shape or let the National Education Department determine it for us. I would prefer that we determine our size and shape and remain a research university. However, we need to know whether UDW can remain a research university or what we need to do to become a research university. If we want to remain a research university, can we sustain ourselves as a research university? How do we reposition ourselves to remain and sustain ourselves as a research university? These are key questions that the repositioning exercise must answer. Therefore the repositioning of UDW is related to the national size and shape exercise. They feed into each other but the repositioning of UDW is the over-arching process.

2. The repositioning process cannot act as a tabula rasa process. It has to build and continue from SPTT. Moreover, people that were involved in SPTT should be drawn into the new process. As I indicated earlier, SPTT has begun repositioning the university through the programs we offer in the different schools. We need to evaluate the quality of all our programs. Are these programs adequately resourced, are they sustainable, what are the current throughput rates of students, do they have a competitive edge in attracting students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels? There are many other questions that need to be asked during the repositioning of UDW. Such questions will evaluate our capability, our strength, weaknesses and areas for attention.

3. Regional Options : I have stated several times during the past two years that the Single Institution of Tertiary Education in KZN is the best option. I will continue to advocate for that position. I have asked Dr J. Butler-Adam to convene a special

_____ in the region to explore further the options available to us in the context of the size and shape debate.

4. Although, Prof. McCarthy, Ms. Vaughan and Mr. Prem Naidoo wrote the repositioning document, they themselves need not necessarily be the person's that execute the repositioning. The selection of the task team members for the execution of this task should be decided in consultation with senate. Ideally, the university planning committee together with senior management, deans and other appropriate persons should drive this process. On the other hand, national size and shape exercise will be completed shortly and we need to respond with haste. Firstly, we need to comment on the proposals from the national size and shape task team. Secondly, we need to understand in which type i.e. four-year undergraduate institution, university with limited doctoral programs or a fully-fledged research university will UDW fall into. Given our historical performance and a cursory glance of the data on UDW we will most likely fall slightly short of becoming a fully-fledged research university. However, it seems that if we take immediate remedial action then UDW can become a fully-fledged research university. Therefore, thirdly we need to identify what we need to do so UDW can be classified as a research university. We cannot afford to wait to consult with everybody but we need to act on these tasks immediately. I have asked Prof Soni to act on this issue. He will be drawing various academics into this process.

Council and the Management team are both committed to ensuring that we not only survive at the highest typology level but that we ensure UDW's place as one of the best research universities in South Africa and on the continent. I am aware that we are in ongoing planning mode which creates uncertainty. However, this is unavoidable due to national restructuring of higher education. I acknowledge the need for consultation, high levels of participation and transparency, however we need to act with speed and sometimes it does not allow for greater consultation. How do we deal with this tension? I would like to hear from you. Lastly, I appeal to you, we as a university community need to act timeously and proactively to ensure the future of UDW as a research university.

Please circulate this document to all staff within the Faculty or make your staff aware that this document is available on the VC's website.

INSTITUTE OF EASTERN LANGUAGES

Report on a meeting with Mr M. Pillay
Chief Executive Director
Department of Education and Culture Services
ex House of Delegates
15 November 1994

Present

Department: Mr M. Pillay (C.E.D.), Dr Naicker, Mr H. Rameshur, Mr Venter

Institute: Mr P.I. Devan, Dr R. Hemraj

1. Mr Pillay welcomed the delegates from the Institute and introduced his officials.
   He invited the delegation from the Institute to make its presention.

2. Mr Devan thanked Mr Pillay for granting the Institute an audience. He outlined briefly the
   circumstances which necessitated the request for this meeting and asked Dr Hemraj to table
   a report.

3. Dr Hemraj reported on the meeting of 20 October 1994 between representatives of the
   Department and those of the Institute (Refer to attached Document) and stressed the need for
   co-operation between the Department and the Institute to ensure that Eastern languages were
   not allowed to disappear from the school curriculum.

4. In his reponse Mr Pillay made the following points:

    4.1 He expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Institute in promoting Eastern
        languages and our culture.
    4.2 He was mindful of the community's concern for the future of Eastern languages.
    4.3 He assured the delegation that the Institute will be consulted after the results of the
        survey were completed. He stressed that no unilateral decision would be taken by
        the Department that would adversely affect Eastern languages.
    4.4 He had continuously worked in the interest of Eastern languages at the various
        negotiating forums.
    4.5 He emphasised that Zulu will definitely not be offered as an option to Eastern
        languages in 1995.
    4.6 He expected a policy on languages for the Kwa Zulu-Natal region to be made in
        the next few weeks.
    4.7 He invited the Institute to continue to keep open the communication channels
        between itself and the Department who will, in turn, always consult the Institute on
        matters of interest to the Indian community.

The Institute's delegates left the meeting feeling confident that the Chief Executive Director in
particular and his Department as a whole will not do anything that will result in the "demise of
Eastern languages" in schools that are attended predominantly by Indian pupils.

It also became clear to our delegates that there was need for the community to ensure
that sufficient numbers of our pupils are motivated to undertake the study of Eastern
languages.

INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES
RADIO LOTUS PANEL DISCUSSION

Panelists: Mr P.I. Devan, Drs Aziz, Sitaram, Hemraj

1. INSTITUTE'S POLICY ON LANGUAGES

1. Institute accepts the principle of 11 official languages for South Africa.

2. It supports the idea of ENGLISH being made the main language of communication.
   It is the leading international language of communication.
   It is the most widely accepted language in South Africa.
   It has the best potential to unite all the peoples of the country.

3. If a second official language must be learnt, pupils should be given the option to choose from among the remaining ten official languages. No single language must be imposed as a compulsory second language.

   In fact our standpoint goes further, in that we believe that if a pupil wishes to take his/her mother tongue as the second language then this should be allowed.

4. If, however, pupils are obliged because it is government policy - whether national or provincial - to learn a second official language then the Institute strongly recommends that Eastern languages be accommodated as a third language option but that they be made fully fledged examination subjects and *optional* to other non basic and non critical subjects like history or geography.

2. What objections does the Institute have against Afrikaans?

1. The Institute does not object to Afrikaans per se. Its objection is that Afrikaans must not be a **compulsory** second language not even in the interim period. This view will be supported by most Indian parents and pupils.

3. Will the Institute object to Zulu as a compulsory second language in Kwa Zulu-Natal?

1. Technically, YES! The Institute reiterates it stand-point that the second language must be optional. The option will allow, perhaps a sizeable number but even if the number is small, to take one of the other official languages as their second language. In keeping with the spirit of the interim constitution, this opportunity should not be denied to those pupils.

2. In reality, however, this is hardly a major problem in Kwa Zulu-Natal where most pupils - including the majority of Indian pupils (if not all of them) - will opt for Zulu as a second language if it is offered as one of the options.

19.

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

Afrikaans 'the hated tongue of apartheid'

I READ with interest four separate items in your newspaper (October 23) concerning the outcry over the "downgrading" of Afrikaans.

So many fatuous comments were made, the most absurd being that it was all some kind of conspiracy by the English, English-speakers and "English capitalism".

Afrikaners claim that 15 million South Africans "understand" Afrikaans, and that this represents some 44,5 percent of the population.

Of course, it does. For the past 50 years, the language has been rammed down our throats by successive Afrikaner governments. It has been the language used by government, the army and, more important, by the police.

The blacks of our country had no choice but to learn Afrikaans to survive.

And now the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereniging (ATKV) wails piteously that "everyone is blaming Afrikaans for all the injustices of the past".

Not so. The blame lies in the intransigent and arrogant Broederbond mentality, whose advocates tried by force and law to impose their will and language on all South Africans.

But, as Jacob Dlamini so succinctly points out in his excellent article: "For many Afrikaners the loss of political power has uncomfortably coincided with the loss of cultural dominance."

The Foundation for Afrikaans claims that the language is "among the four most popular in the country".

I would venture that it is singularly the most unpopular language in SA. It is the hated tongue of apartheid, the Boers and the Broederbond regime.

We should put their bleatings to the test, hold a referendum and ask simply if South Africans of all races would prefer English or Afrikaans as the official language.

Eventually, there can be only one official language. All others must be honoured and given "equitable" place in our country, but Afrikaans is only one of those, and will never again be given its force-fed overpowering dominance in SA.
— **BP, Johannesburg**

POST NATAL. 2-5. Nov. 1994.

Afrikaans move sparks row

By Logan Govender

THE proposal by the Department of Education and Culture Services in the former House of Delegates to offer Afrikaans as one of the two compulsory subjects and Zulu as a third optional subject has been slammed again — this time by the Institute of Eastern Languages.

A number of organisations, including the SA Democtratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu), have criticised the department for its move.

Dr Rampersadh Hemraj, chairman of the ad-hoc committee of the Institute of Eastern Languages, confirmed his organisation had sent a memorandum to the department to set up a meeting to discuss the issue.

Dr Hemraj said: "By conducting this survey the curriculum policy section is, in effect, supporting the perpetuation of Afrikaans as a compulsory second language.

"This is totally unacceptable even as an interim measure and is denounced in the strongest terms.

"There is no reason why Zulu, which is the dominant language in KwaZulu Natal, could not be offered as an optional second language from next January."

There should be an option for the second language and pupils should be free to select one of the remaining 10 official languages or even their mother tongue if that is not an official language.

Eastern languages, together with the languages of other minority groups, should be offered as fully fledged examination subjects.

Dr Hemraj added the effect of his organisation's proposal was that while the majority of pupils were likely to choose the dominant language of the region as their second language, others would not be denied the opportunity to exercise their preference for any other language.

"In keeping with the spirit of the interim constitution, languages of minority groups should form an integral part of the school curriculum."

Mr Nagoor Bissetty, PRO for the education department, said the purpose of the survey was to ascertain to what extent there was a demand for Zulu and to see whether there were teachers available to teach it.

TRIBUNE. 30. 10. 94.

Keep Afrikaans – Indian dept

The Indian education department has come under fire for its move to retain Afrikaans as a compulsory second language while other education departments are expected to recommend the axing of this language's status.

The Indian education department has proposed that English and Afrikaans continue enjoying compulsory language status, while Zulu be included as a third language option with Indian languages. — *Tribune Reporter*

Institute pushes for option on languages

THE Institute of Indian languages has called on the government to treat Eastern languages as a fully-fleged examination subject which

Languages dropped
NEIGHBOUR NEWS
9. 11. 94

School row looms

FAROOK KHAN
NeighbourNews Reporter

A MAJOR row is brewing over plans to drop Indian languages at school.

The Institute of Indian Languages, made up of concerned parents and cultural organisations, is calling for English to be the first language and Zulu second, with one of five Indian languages and Afrikaans being optional.

A delegation from the institute is due to meet the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education on the matter.

However, Mr Safee Siddiqi, who is a member of the Institute and the Buzme Adab of Natal, which promotes Urdu as a language, said that parents were ready to take to the streets: "We demand that our languages are taught at schools and if the authorities go against our wishes we will protest strongly and even conduct marches and demonstrations."

He said it was necessary for children to choose from Hindi, Urdu, Gujrathi, Tamil and Telegu, all major Indian languages, and if they did not want to, then they should be free to chose Afrikaans.

The institute is leading the campaign for the preservation of Indian languages at schools.

could be taken in place of a non-essential subject.

This decision was made at a meeting organised by the institute in response to a survey undertaken by Education and Culture Services (former House of Delegates) on the feasibility of allowing schools to offer Zulu as a third language as an option to the Eastern languages.

The survey in the form of a circular sent to Indian schools implied that Afrikaans would be retained as a second compulsory language.

The meeting attended by representatives of 35 community organisations strongly condemned the survey and called for its immediate withdrawal.

In addition, the meeting decided that in the national interest and to foster unity, English be made the main language in all schools.

That there be an option for the second language ie. people should have the right to select as their second language one of the remaining ten official languages of the country or even a mother-tongue language as their second language.

Chairman of the special adhoc committee formed by the institute to deal with this issue, Dr Rampersadh Hemraj, said the effect of this proposal is that, while the majority of the citizens are likely to choose the dominant language of the region as their second language, others must not be denied the opportunity to exercise their preference for any other language.

The institute also wants languages of minority groups to form an integral part of the school curriculum.

"If Zulu is offered as third language it could impact negatively on Indian languages and vice-versa, thus making Zulu suffer in the process.

"As Zulu is on of the 11 official languages it should be made an optional second language.

"In the greater part of KwaZulu Natal most students would probably opt for Zulu.

"The third language option could be an eastern language or even some other minority language such as French and German.

"We are also pushing for Eastern languages to be accepted as fully fledged examination subjects which could possibly be taken instead of a non-basic subject such as history or geography", said Dr Hemraj.

A memorandum outlining the institute's position on the language issue has been sent to the offices of the Minister of National Education, Minister of Education, KwaZulu Natal.

Saffe Siddique

Appendix G

Newspaper Articles and other Primary Material

The ethnic dilemma

NIC should emerge, minus ANC, to attract considerable support

A RECENT edition of the *Herald* had three separate references to the debate surrounding mobilisation through ethnic organisations. However, the various commentators, we would contend, fail to address the crucial issue: The continuing tenacity of ethnic identity and ethnic consciousness.

Let us recap these different positions. MJ Naidoo tells us simply that Indians should discard their ethnic role and join forces with the ANC. Dennis Nkosi tells us that the building of "non-racial South Africa will be successful if problems such as those found in the United States are resolved during the initial ... ges by assimilating minorities". Later he tells us that the "cultural programmes and the religious festivals of the Indian community will have to be overthrown into the emerging South African culture". For Frene Ginwala, Indians as part of the oppressed majority, have no problems.

A common factor which characterises these comments is a turning lack of engagement with the notion of ethnicity.

Nelson Mandela's speech to the Western Cape Regional Congress of the ANC made extensive references to the under-representation of coloureds in Western Cape ANC structures. He called for greater attention to be given to the mobilisation of coloureds, Indians and whites and argued that the ethnic dimension cannot simply be dismissed. While Mandela's engagement with the notion of ethnicity is to be welcomed, the organisational form it the movement will adopt to advance this process of mobilisation remains disturbingly unclear and confused.

Any attempt to hand this responsibility to separate ethnical-based political organisations operating within the coat tail of ANC itself would be disastrous. That task is, in our view, which the ANC itself has to undertake. If the NIC wishes to ... as a "representative" of the ... community then it must ... on the basis of an entirely separate political agenda and culture.

Ethnicity

There have been two broad approaches to the notion of ethnicity. Early sociologists held the view that ethnicity will disappear with modernisation and industrialisation. Some Marxists had a variant of this thesis suggesting that growing class unity and class consciousness would simply override national or ethnic chauvinism. Recent developments, nationally and internationally, have proven this view to be untenable.

The alternative view, which suggests ethnicity is such a "natural" bond between people as to be immutable or primordial, is equally untenable. Within this tradition there are those who believe ethnicity is a concept that should be appropriated to facilitate political organisation and mobilisation.

Part of the problem in investigating ethnicity, of course, is that it is an extremely slippery concept. One has constantly to be sensitive to both sides of the ethnic coin: The "popular impulses of ethnicity coming from below", and the invention of the ruling class "from above".

Despite our rejection of the "primordial" explanation of ethnicity, we believe the impact of ethnic consciousness cannot be ignored or simply explained away under the rubric of "false consciousness". Such a position conveniently precludes the need for any explanation. As Neville Alexander explains: "To deny the reality of prejudice and perceived differences, whatever their origin, is to disarm oneself strategically and tactically."

It is therefore incumbent upon both activists and left academics to acknowledge the social significance of ethnicity if for no other reason than that of preventing the field to be left open to abuse.

The ANC view

While conceding the concept of ethnicity is a "slippery" one, the ANC's official theoretical and practical position on the ethnic factor has been particularly difficult to grasp.

Throughout the decades the movement has preached an African nationalism and has discounted notions of ethnic consciousness within the African majority as the invention of the ruling class. The unity and the realisation of a national consciousness within the African majority was not something to be struggled for but was viewed as something that has already been attained.

This position, however, was not held consistently in relation to all sectors of the disenfranchised population. Within the "Indian" and "coloured" constituencies, the materiality of ethnicity was accepted and was allowed organisational expression in the continued existence and establishment of the NIC, TIC, CPO, and so on.

This classical Congress position has, especially in the 1980s, been challenged. Many activists within the Congress movement felt that ethnically compartmentalised ways of mobilising and organising militated against the broader non-racialism which the liberation movement had come to accept as its central platform in its opposition to the apartheid state.

This was not confined simply to African activists. "Indian" and 'coloured' activists pinned their banners on the UDF and youth congresses, and shunned what they saw as the ethnic chauvinism of the "Indian" Congresses.

Thus the ANC's approach to the ethnic factor is imbued with contradictory impulses and confusion. This confusion is reflected in the approach of the different commentators in the Herald.

Discarding one's ethnic tag is not as simple as MJ Naidoo would have us believe. Consciousness does not develop through individual mental processes. They are largely shaped by one's history, modes of incorporation, and the economy of the region. One cannot get up one day and simply throw off one's ethnic tag. The formation of identity is a much more complex phenomenon.

Similarly Frene Ginwala must understand that asserting one's collective identity as part of the oppressed majority is not the solution to the ethnic issue. Indians are also oppressed but in many respect this has taken on forms different to the oppression experienced by Africans. For example a differential incorporation into the social hierarchy of Durban has taken place over the last 100 years with whites at the top, Indians in the middle and Africans at the bottom.

Dennis Nkosi's proposal to assimilate minorities, for example, through interweaving Indian culture and religious festivals into a broader South Africanism is likely to increase fears.

Undoubtedly, much work remains to be done in breaking down barriers of cultural and religious chauvinism and exclusivity and at creating and fostering a broader multiculturalism. But positioning an aim of total assimilation — rather than aiding the process — is just as likely to seriously undermine the creation of such a multicultural identity in the process of building a society after apartheid.
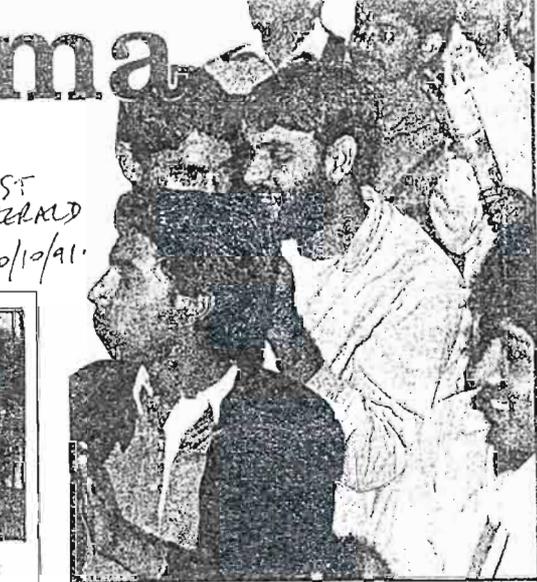
The ANC should not allow the solution to the ethnic issue to find organisational expression in ethnic exclusivity and separate cultural or racial political organistions within its fold. This will not allow us to begin building a non-racial South African nation and destroying separatist tendencies among us.

The ANC must be identified by all sectors of the potential South African nation, as their very own organisation. The embryo of the South African nation must be built within the ambit of the liberation movement.

The establishment of such a single non-racial organisation need not ignore the ethnic factor. In fact it will ensure that ethnicity will no longer linger and fester in subsidiary organisations, but rather will be raised within the heart of the non-racial organisation.

If the ANC wants to represent as broad a strata as possible, then it needs to ensure that the environment for that to happen is created within its organisational apparatus. If that means it has to be sensitive to the composition of its leadership depending on demographic and regional dynamics then it must be prepared to travel that road.

A right to exist

This position does not mean the NIC does not have a right to exist. However if the NIC wants to continue to exist then it needs to make a clear programmatic statement of its intent for the next five years at least. It needs to have a profile and policy that is independent of the ANC. This is a crucial issue.

If the NIC continues to be a surrogate/conduit for the ANC then it should not exist. Indeed it should be actively opposed because it then has no reason to exist separately. Why do we need Farouk Meer to interpret Mandela's speeches for us? Why will say, George Sewpersadh be more adept at telling us about the ANC's economic policy than, say, Tito Mboweni? Because they are Indians?

One may ask: Why do an increasing number of Indians support the National Party? The NP's growing attraction to Indians and coloureds has not — we must concede — been built upon the establishment of Indian and coloured MPs existing simultaneously both within and separately from the NP itself. It has been based on Indians and coloureds accepting NP policy.

Alongside developing its own profile — if it chooses — the NIC must make a concerted effort to clean up its image. Allegations of cabalism, control over financial resources and political in-fighting have plagued the organisation. Branch structures have largely disintegrated.

The NIC may be able to attract considerable support. To harness that support it needs to emerge from the shadows. More importantly, for it to justify its existence, it has to emerge minus the ANC.

However sadly, recent pronouncements by the NIC to begin a campaign to woo Indians to the side of the ANC indicates a continuing refusal by the NIC to develop such an identity.

The run-up to the Patriotic Front (PF) and all-party conference has once again raised the controversial issue of mobilising through ethnic organisations. The Herald has been at the forefront of highlighting this debate. African National Congress member ASHWIN DESAI, a University of Durban-Westville sociology lecturer who is researching a doctoral dissertation on approaches to nation and ethnicity, and VISHNU PADAYACHEE, an Institute for Social and Economic Research senior research fellow who holds a doctorate in Economics and International Finance, raise important questions.

ASHWIN DESAI

VISHNU PADAYACHEE

Freeze, flee ... or fight

Guest writer and sociologist **DR ASHWIN DESAI**, *author of Arise Ye Coolies, who wrote his doctorate on ethnic mobilisation, says the Indian community here must prepare itself for a struggle in the emerging democracy, and entrench its place in the "rainbow nation" without fear.*

There are three physiological responses which every animal displays when it is in a state of fear: it freezes, flees or turns to fight. Now, if there is one characteristic that defines the Indian community in South Africa at this time it is fear and, as expected, it responds the way nature decrees.

The Indian community simply won't survive unless it discards freezing up and fleeing as strategies to cope with its situation.

The time is fast approaching when Indians must prepare themselves again to fight.

This fight is not against other racial groups or communities, nor is it a fight to protect, as certain racebaiters are sure, to respond, the "privileges" Indians have allegedly secured over the years. It is simply a fight for their place in this society, free of fear and free of apology.

Many people outside the community will struggle to understand how Indians are still made to feel they do not belong. Sometimes it is just a look, a sneer or a whispered "amakula".

Many other times it is pretty damn explicit, like affirmative action policies where only pigment counts.

Scapegoat

Throughout South Africa's history, the Indian has always been the scapegoat, the perpetual stranger.

During indenture, Indians were super-exploited and brutalised by the English sugar barons and, when they had done with the Indians, the authorities tried to repatriate us.

During apartheid Indians were denoted in the history books as the "Indian problem" and herded into "coolie locations".

And in times of economic downturn, like 1949 and 1985, Indians became the victims of African anger.

Indeed Indians' entire history, with the odd protest here and there, is a chronology of victimisation.

During the heady days of resistance it was expected that this would change once apartheid was defeated. Then Indians would finally be full and equal citizens of this beautiful land. Unfortunately this was not to be. Indians are a classic "minority" group.

Existence

Caught between a rampant black elite who think that because they have "arrived" in the political sphere, they can push everyone around, and unreconstructed white racists who still hold sway in the business world, the ordinary Indian man and women lives a very uncertain existence.

The responses from the leaders of the community have taken two tacks. Most of the politicos have tried to ingratiate themselves with the ruling party, the ruling culture and the ruling race.

Trying so hard to be raceless they have hidden behind their struggle CVs and party connections. Nevertheless they have suffered: Govin Reddy being the most obvious example.

The super-rich business class has also found a temporary reprieve, using its wealth to, literally, buy seats at Mandela's table and thereby create some space for themselves.

For ordinary people, the response has been to become insular: erecting high walls and neighbourhood watches or taking plane tickets to Australia.

Others still have adopted a chilling and unacceptable racism, picking fights with Africans who wander into their street as a way of asserting themselves.

This is not the way. Indians must reach back into a proud history of struggle and mobilise for their place in the sun.

Indians must attack the "common-sense" calculations that everyone makes every day on the basis of race: there are too many Indian judges now, or a rich African still gets the job above a working-class Indian. This attack is made not on behalf of Indians but on behalf of the principle of non-racialism which Indians once held so dear.

Challenge

Indians must strengthen community organisations that challenge the authorities.

Clearly, protecting the quality of schooling is not done to keep privileges for Indians, but because they reject the idea that equality means sinking to the lowest common denominator. If Indians do not fight for proper teacher/pupil ratios and decent schools, this will only let the government off the hook as far as delivery is concerned.

Every year standards will fall a little lower.

Lastly, Indians must begin registering now in great numbers for the 1999 election.

Trying to remain anonymous, hoping that they will be allowed to maintain their lifestyle is no option.

The time has come for Indians to stop being victims and to become makers of their own destiny.

Taking a leaf out of the American civil rights movement, Indians need to start a mass movement to register as voters for the upcoming elections.

Grannies and Grandpas, gangsters and sweethearts must all begin collecting their new identity documents. The Indian vote holds the key for a province where a hung parliament is probable.

Concerns

If all 400 000 eligible Indian voters register, then political parties will take Indian concerns seriously.

Hopefully this will stimulate a political awakening and the formation of a generation of real leaders that all can respect and trust.

Not since Gandhi have Indians had ideals that could unite us. It is not a time to flee or freeze, but to fight. To fight for a South African future.

ARISE: From humble canegrowers to a community which holds the balance of power in KwaZulu-Natal for next year's general election.
Graphic: RODERICK EPHRAIM

Minorities are seeking a way forward

Will Hinduism and Islam be overshadowed during the country's drive toward an African renaissance? EDWIN NAIDU raises this question in light of the possible setting up of a commission to look after minority linguistic and cultural rights.

The loud call for an African renaissance, often echoed so eloquently by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, was relegated to the sidelines when a multitude of South African leaders gathered this week to discuss proposals on how to protect cultural, linguistic and religious rights.

Leaders representing a diverse collection of people, including Tamil, Telegu, Hindi, Muslim, Afrikaners and African traditional heads, spoke of their hopes and concerns of how their individual groups would benefit from a commission for the promotion and protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities.

Provision was made in the constitution for the establishment of such a commission to strengthen constitutional democracy in South Africa. The commission would be similar to other independent state institutions, including the SA Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality, Public Protector, Auditor General and the Electoral Commission.

However, there is no clarity on how the commission would function, although it has been widely suggested that it operate on a partisan basis and fall under the ambit of the Human Rights Commission, thus saving taxpayers the expense of forking out additional monies for staff, buildings and office furniture.

At the start, Mbeki told the gathering at Gallagher Estate in Midrand, Johannesburg, that the diversity of our society is not a liability but an asset.

"We must outgrow the negative connotation given to the concern of group rights by the architects of apartheid.
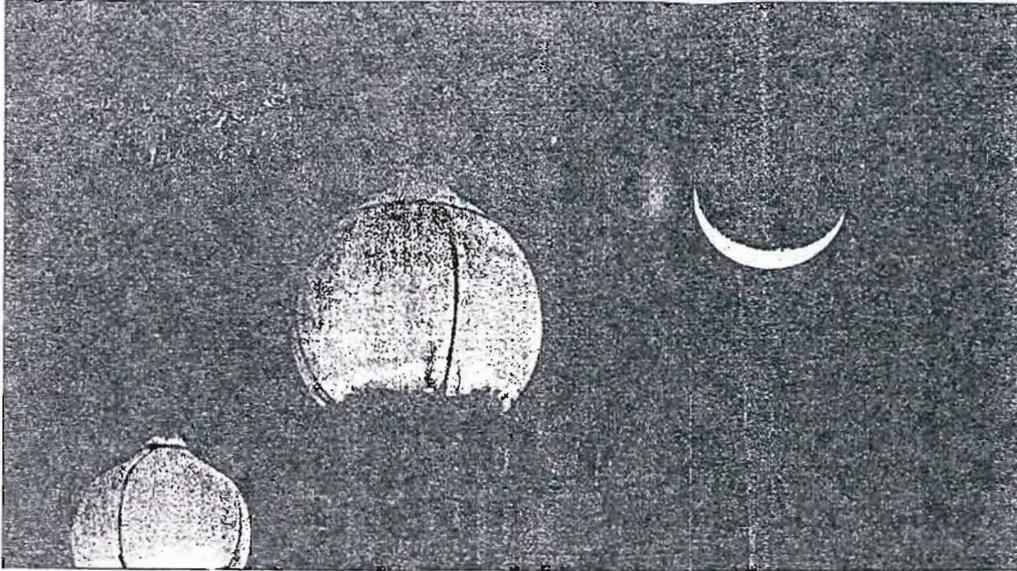
"Equally, we must make clear that the pursuit of the protection and promotion of cultural, linguistic and religious rights has to do precisely with securing the equal rights of all our citizens," he said.

However, Mbeki added that as South Africans, all people had to seek to reach across specific group identities, to adopt each culture and language as their own and not to allow diversity to become a factor for division and conflict.

Much of the instability that has afflicted post-colonial Africa has arisen from the failure to properly handle the issue of nation building.

Mbeki said: "Accordingly, we cannot afford to adopt a complacent attitude towards this issue, believing that the mere establishment of a truly democratic system will be adequate to attend to this matter.

"We know this as a matter of fact that, correctly, many among the ethnic groups in our country feel very keenly that their languages and cultures continue to be marginalised and overshadowed by others," Mbeki said.

He added that Afrikaners were also feeling a growing sense of marginalisation.

They had concerns, in particular, about the Afrikaans language, schools and access to job opportunities.

Mbeki concluded by advising delegates to refrain from the pursuit of partisan interests, oblivious of the fact that rights could only be upheld within a united, democratic, nonracial and non-sexist South Africa.

However, several delegates reminded Mbeki during the conference, chaired by HRC chairperson Dr Barney Pityana, that the protection of their group's rights, irrespective of the conference's agenda, aimed at drawing up a way forward.

Dr Sarres Padayachee, spokesman for the SA Tamil Federation, said there was a danger of Indian languages being phased out because of cutbacks in education spending in KwaZulu-Natal.

She said there should be legislation to protect Tamil because it was one of the oldest languages in the world.

One of her suggestions was that the language be taught at schools and universities.

Professor Varija Prabakaran, from the University of Durban-Westville, said there appeared to be a mismatch between government policies and action at provincial level.

Only R4-million had been spent on Indian languages in the province and the mismatch showed a lack of respect and tolerance, she said.

Rajendran Govender, regional director with the KZN arts and culture department, said the changes occurring in South Africa brought with it many hazards and obstacles.

"Over the past decade warning signals have come from all the linguistic and cultural leaders of the five language groups concerning the serious decline in the spoken level of their respective languages."

He said survival of cultures was dependent on the languages, which were the key tool for promotion of Indian culture.

Factors which caused a decline in the number of people speaking in the Indian vernacular included the adoption of a Western way of life, inter-marriages between people of different religious groups and the break-up of the joint family system.

Another speaker from KwaZulu-Natal said Indian languages were not accorded recognition among the country's official languages, despite their rich history.

"Every tradition is unique," said University of Durban-Westville and the SA Hindu Maha Sabha's Dr Thillayvel Naidoo, but he appealed to religious leaders of all faiths to stop the hurt "when people of our religion are forced to convert to other faiths".

Pityana assured all speakers that their submissions would be included in the report which would be drawn up after the conference.

Praveen Naidoo of the Andra Maha Saba said his organisation had 100 000 Telegu-speaking members in the country.

He said that they battled to propagate and advance their language in a multicultural society.

Nassar Said, as a Zanzibari with the Islamic Federation Movement, said the government should not lose sight of the fact that South Africans were crying out for recognition.

Jody Kollapen, a commissioner with the Human Rights Commission, said the setting up of a body to protect and promote the interests raised would have to be justifiable because taxpayers' funds would be used.

"The language of the constitution is the language of the communities and there is a need to remain loyal to the spirit of the country," he said.

The Minister of Constitutional Affairs Mohammed Valli Moosa said the discussions at the conference gave his department "a basis to go forward".

"We have no grand plans but want to listen to everybody," he said.

Mbeki, Valli Moosa, and other dignitaries, including National Speaker Frene Ginwala, Acting President Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Arts, Science and Culture Minister Lionel Mtshali, sat through the entire day's deliberations.

No one denied that the promotion and protection of cultural, linguistic and religious rights was indeed a promise in the constitution coming to fruition. In fact, although the constitution makes provision for nine out of the 11 languages as official, it pledges to promote and ensure respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa.

This includes Gujerati, Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Arabic and Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

Whatever reservations speakers had, they could easily have been allayed had they freshened their minds by referring to the constitution. People of all religious beliefs ought to feel safe since they were being protected by law. They should consider alternative measures to safeguard their languages from the onset of Westernisation and ensure that the break-up of joint families did not persist.

While the deputy president and his colleagues all seemed to recognise the importance of religious groups to exist, when the curtains came down, one could not help but wonder how the ably delivered presentations of those eminent people who make up our diverse society linked up with Mbeki's African renaissance. Many at the conference applauded Mbeki's speech, which alluded to a "one South Africa, many peoples" theme, but the party-poopers retreated into their own, empty cocoons when it was their turn to join the party.

MINORITY RIGHTS: Islamic representatives say South African Muslims are crying out for their culture to be recognised despite the trend towards an African rennaisance.

PRESERVING CULTURE: Hindu leaders say traditions and cultural practices, such as bharatya natyam dancing could be forgotten if they were not preserved legally.

War of words over new radio station

Sunday 11 Oct 98 Sunday Trib
Tribune

The launch of Hindvani, a Hindi community radio station, has raised the issue of a north and south Indian divide. YASANTHA NAIDOO reports.

A comment from a reader responding to the opening of Hindvani, a Hindi community radio station, went like this: "The roti-ous (Hindi-speakers) are side-lining us again."

The station was established by the Hindi Shiksha Sangh to promote the language.

The reader, one of several who called and wrote to the Tribune Herald, said he was "upset" a Hindi radio station was operating and could be granted a permanent licence.

"Why does there have to be a station only for them, what about the other groups?"

Hindvani was officially launched at the beginning of this month as part of the Hindi Shiksha Sangh's 50th anniversary celebrations.

The organisation, which promotes the language throughout the country, established the station to maximise its objectives.

The complaints about the presence of a Hindi-only radio station highlights the division in the Hindu community based on linguistic differences. South Indians, who are often referred to as 'porridge-ous' because of their affinity for maize meal

porridge made during the Mariemmen festival, form about 60% of the Hindu population.

North Indians, mainly Hindi and Gujerati-speaking, are often referred to as "roti-ous" because of their affinity for the Indian leavened bread.

The division based on the linguistic difference has been ongoing for many years with some believing the caste system to be the cause while others say the South African situation imitates life in India.

Yana Pillay, South African Tamil Federation vice-president, said polarisation between the two groups existed.

Pillay said his organisation believed certain north Indian sectors "dominated" the community.

"For some reason there is a strong leaning towards the north in many aspects of our cultural activities and media and I believe this stems from India where the north Indian sector controls the government.

"The South African Tamil Federation withdrew from the Hindu Maha Sabha four years ago because of this imbalance. We believed our linguistic group was being marginalised and this continues today."

Pillay said there was one group who obtained an element of power and he perceived them to "consciously marginalise the Tamil people".

"Our organisation recently

took this matter up with the Indian consulate.

"The consulate has hosted many public functions with most of the cultural entertainment leaning toward the north. This doesn't promote inter-linguistic harmony."

He said while the idea of a radio station promoting a language was "great," he could understand why people were concerned about its promoting only one language.

"Hindvani is an excellent idea and we have congratulated the Hindi Shiksha Sangh but in the long term we believe a common radio promoting all languages is vital.

"There is no need for division. For too long the Indian community has been downtrodden and we shouldn't be fighting. In the end we have to be strong to survive as a united community."

Dr Rampersad Hemraj, Hindi Shiksha Sangh honorary life president and Hindi scholar, said the community should not see the radio station as further dividing the community but see it as "building bridges".

"Hindvani is just one of our organisation's many projects to celebrate its 50 years of existence and we have chosen to do this by promoting Hindi on the radio. Nothing stops any other linguistic group from doing the same thing.

"Language propagation is part of our project and I can't

Graphic: RODERICK EPHRAIM
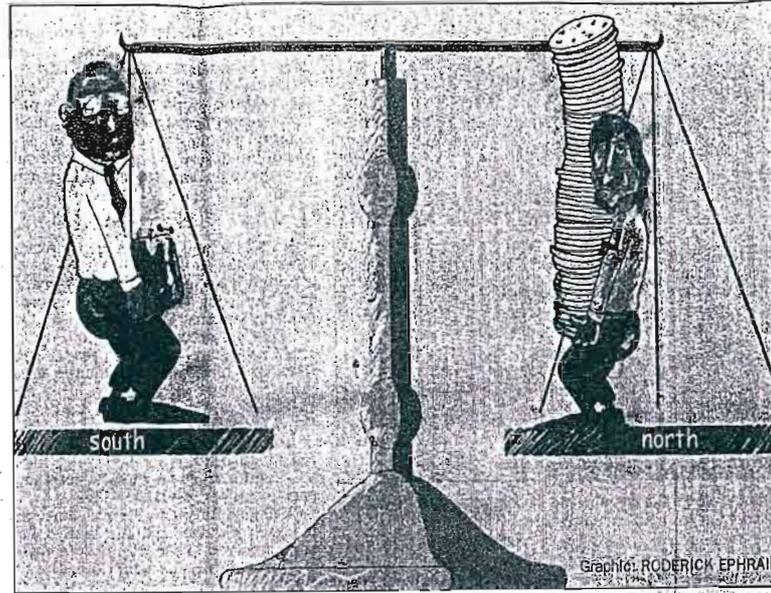
see how this polarises the communities. When South Africa was cut off from India it was up to local people to continue the religious, cultural and social practices.

"We have no qualms therefore about using this very powerful medium, something which was not available to us in the

past, to help us achieve this."

Hemraj said Hindi was the national language of India and by promoting this language people should see this as an advantage to them.

"What do people lose by learning Hindi? This is not an attempt to divide the community but rather to build bridges.

Every group must be allowed to promote its cultural heritage and its language, it's a constitutional right." He realised the north and south Indian problem existed in state radio or community radio stations which were set up to broadcast to the Indian community.

"In the past there has been a

problem with partiality towards one sector and this should be addressed. However, there is no justification in questioning the presence of a language-based radio station."

Ram Maharaj, national Hindu Dharma Sabha chairman, said criticism against Hindvani was predictable.

"Propagation is a necessary reality but it is imperative that collective integrated structures and programmes be set up to minimise polarisation and foster inter-linguistic harmony.

"Given the current financial restrictions, all linguistic groups should pool their resources to promote all languages, to advocate nationality among Hindus and not fan the flames of division."

Maharaj said the community needed to translate "our Hindu dream theme, unity in diversity, into reality by underpinning it as a principle or guiding force".

"Hindus must stop this pernicious posture of being north or south Indian and must regard themselves as South African Indians."

To this end a Hindu Day celebration is planned for May 2 next year. There will not be any one linguistic group or religious organisation planning the event, rather a joint effort.

"This kind of venture can only cement Hindu solidarity and strength at a grassroots level where it is needed."

Tholsiah TP Naidoo, Hindu

cultural scholar, said the po isation between north south Indian communities emphasised at the time of Group Areas Act.

"Originally, Indians li harmoniously with black ne bours until they were forced their properties and alloca areas. At the time some shre person working within council fragmented the Ind people and it was from time that the people be arranging themselves in c munities according to their guage. This was the death k for the unification of Ind people."

Naidoo said economically people who controlled the dia, including the cinema, w Hindi and Gujerati-speaking

"This north Indian bias reflected in news, films music that were presented the Indian community and c tinues to a large extent tod largely because the so Indian community is fragme ed with enormous bicker and character assassinati taking place.

"A radio station li Hindvani is a good idea, should be operated with a c tain amount of circumspecti The owners should realise station could provoke furth polarisation and should more sensitive."

Naidoo said the commun should remember "religi doesn't have a mother tongue

Indian cinemas not affected by competition

NELANDRI PILLAY

While the Bollywood movie wave may be taking Durban by storm with blockbusters like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and *Prem Agan* packing in audiences at upmarket theatres, such as Musgrave Centre, Indian cinema bosses remain "unaffected" by the new competition as they believe the trend will not last long.

Faizel Sahib, owner of Isfahan Cinema in Victoria Street, said his business was not affected by movie giant Ster Kinekor's interest in Bollywood as the movie market was open and there was "plenty of water in the ocean".

"There are many products available. It is just a matter of picking the right movie. Sure *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* is a sellout at Musgrave Centre, but it's only because of theatre sizes. It's what we call psychological publicity – our one large theatre is their four small theatres – so people are going to be lining up for a long time.

"I can't see this fad being a long-term money-spinner. Not all films are going to perform like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and it's only a matter of time before the big names lose interest. We'll always be here, of course."

Shiraz cinema boss Amrit Okar said while Indian cinema industry people may feel hurt by audiences moving to other cinemas, they're not losers because the market would always remain open.

"It's fair play, anyone can show anything. There is a lot of politics in the cinema industry and good things never last forever."

Okar said location of cinemas was also a determining factor when it came to audience choice.

"Our cinemas are located in areas renowned for criminal activity. We can't help it. People are therefore moving to outlying and more upmarket areas, such as Musgrave. Cinema people are aware of this and are using this to their advantage, to sort of woo people over to their side."
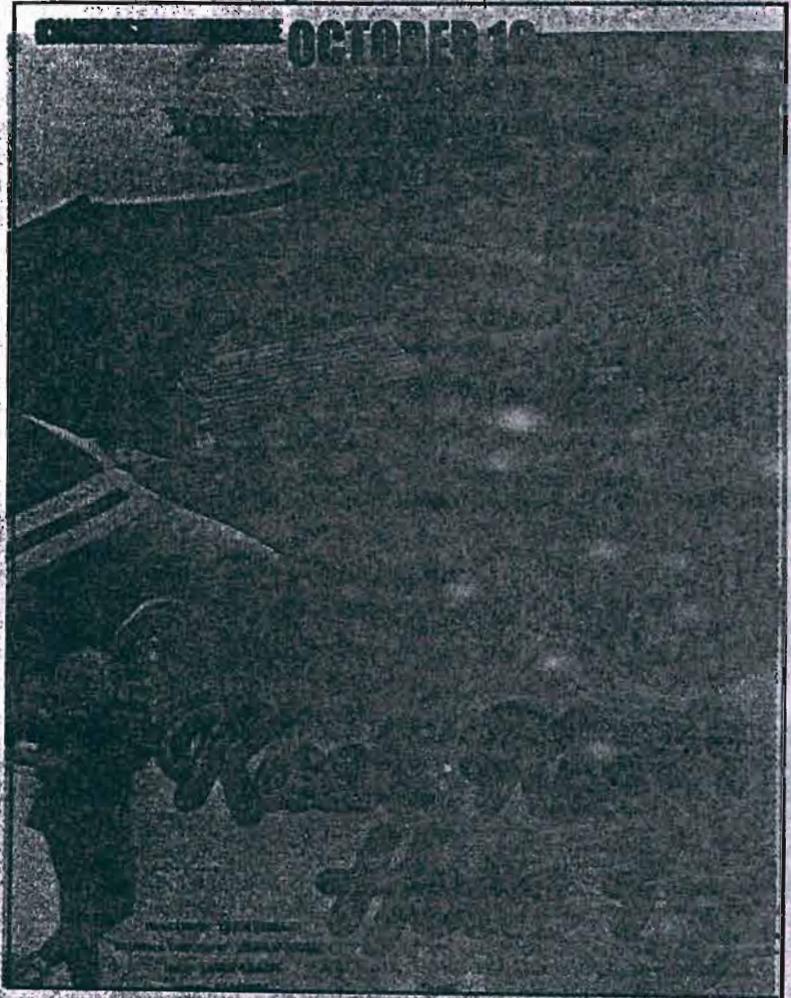
Avalon Cinemas director Aboobaker "AB" Moosa said his group, which owns theatres nationally, also plans to show Indian movies in the future.

"Our family was previously involved in the Indian movie market and with our expansion plans, we intend to get back in because it is a very important market. There is a resurgence of Indian movies around the world as young people try to find their roots."

The general manager of Ster Kinekor in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, Rabin Harbhajun, said the decision to screen Bollywood movies was born out of "public need".

"We were the first company to bring Indian movies to South Africa, but over time we could not source quality movies and had to stop this service. However, we've received numerous requests from the public for Indian movies and when a good opportunity came our way, we grabbed it.

"People are tired of watching poor quality home videos and prefer mainstream cinemas which are very accessible. At Ster Kinekor, we take cinema to the people."

Indians sidelined or manipulated?

Tribune Herald 22 November 1998

Politicians seem to be using affirmative action, a sore point in the Indian community, to curry favour with the much-desired Indian vote. **Yasantha Naidoo** reports

GOVIN REDDY: The SABC...

UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE: The former Indian campus has committed itself to achieving national equity goals in the next 10 years

No quota system

Karen Jackson, University of Natal's spokesman, said the university had no quota system for admitting students.

United we could stand, if we tried

It is sad that the current onslaught against public broadcaster Lotus FM, which should have been about egos and personalities, has become a focus on linguistic backgrounds.

In the latest example highlighting the division between some north Indians, who are mainly Hindi-speaking, and south Indians, who are mainly Tamil-speakers, the newly appointed Lotus FM station manager has been at the receiving end of criticism for changes made to the station.

These changes include the appointment of new presenters and the introduction of new programme formats.

Letter writers to local newspapers were quick to put pen to paper, and some asserted that the changes made were in keeping with Veeran's south Indian "linguistic lineage".

Not too long ago similar allegations dogged former station managers Fakir Hassen and Khalil Sherrif, when listeners claimed the station was biased against south Indians.

Bias

Community radio station Radio Phoenix has also been accused of north and south Indian bias because of its music and board composition.

Lenasia listener Soraya Casslim was the first to express her dissatisfaction over the changes. She claimed one appointment in particular was based on ethnicity.

"To Veeran, as station manager, you need to give us a plausible reason for hiring the mediocre Rangappa (other than linguistic lineage), when you have far more talented and dynamic presenters in your stable."

Another reader, Jyothi Seebran, not only emphasised the difference between north and south, but also said: "It seems that the station manager, Mr Naresh Veeran, is intent on fulfilling his 'Tamil Tiger' ideology by hiring mainly new presenters from the south Indian sector of the community, while marginalising (and removing) north Indian presenters.

ISSUE

The dreaded north Indian versus south Indian debate has reared its ugly head very publicly, reports Yasantha Naidoo

STYLES: The dancer on the right is seen demonstrating a south Indian dance, bharata natyam while the dancers on the left practise the north Indian dance style of kathak

"There is no doubt Lotus FM has a wide pool of available and talented presenters to choose from, yet Veeran has chosen to to put in place a large number of new (and overtly south Indian) voices of dubious talent, thereby drawing attention to his own lack of broadcasting and management experience."

When the first batch of Indians arrived in South Africa, they came as families or from the same village, united by their common dialect, dress and food.

They were brought to South Africa to work as indentured labour on sugarcane fields.

Traditionally, inhabitants of north India are fairer because of the climate, and they speak mainly Hindi.

Those from the south are typically darker because of the harsh sunny climate, and they generally speak Tamil.

Veeran said he was amazed at the accusations of being anti-north Indian.

"Over the past 100 years or so we overcame our personal and group prejudices to forge ahead.

Oppression

"As a community, which in retrospect we never actually were, we were forced to endure oppression, hardship and pain.

"However, we succeeded by rallying together, by overcoming our internal divisions.

"It, therefore, hurts me to see that although we have come so far, built so many bridges, secured a number of relationships, we still use exactly what kept us strong to divide us."

Veeran, whose mother is Hindi-speaking, said that in all his dealings with people, he had always made decisions based on people's characters and never on their religious or ethnic backgrounds.

"When we, as a society, begin to make decisions and live our lives in ways that separate us, we are doomed.

"I come from a mixed background, as will my children one day. This has never played any role in the way I grew up, studied, performed music or indeed lived.

"If the linguistic division that many of us use as a weapon perpetuates itself, I would hate to look back in 10 or 20 years and say that something could have been done, but at the time we were too busy."

Historian Hassim Seedat pointed out that according to the history of the 1860 indentured labourers, farmers employed groups as they disembarked from the ships that arrived from India.

"As a result, there were geographically based groups of people working together, which resulted in closer bonds.

"When you look at the records, employers preferred south Indians because they worked harder.

Agricultural

"One of the reasons for this was that they came from an agricultural background and assimilated quicker than north Indians."

Seedat said that in modern Indian political history, north Indians have controlled the country.

"South Indians were given the short shift and generally regarded as second cousins. This is one of the reasons that Tamil Nadu has been trying to gain independence from the rest of the sub-continent."

He said while the people were intrinsically the same, they were separated by their regional differences. The role of media was very important in preventing further division, he said.

"There has been a lot of debate about the airspace on radio, for example, given to Hindi songs. This is the kind of area where the media can play an important role."

Daily News 11/6/99

Call me South African, not Indian

Shrink-Proof
VASANTHA ANGAMUTHU

CHAROU, coolie, curry-muncher! So-called South African Indian, Indian! Betrayer of the African majority, not-quite-white-not-quite-black, coconut, Grey Street lahnee!

Is this how I am to be defined? Do I spend the rest of my life answering either to a label I have long disowned, a racist slur, an identity tag that is a non-identity, a label that is a quote (so-called "Indian"), or a name that defines me as someone middle-class and exploitative?

This question of identity is currently on my mind because my daughter is now old enough to be let loose in a primary school playground where children, innocent Nazis that they are, will insist on knowing what she is.

Fending off her question "But Mom, what are we?" is proving more difficult as she grows older. I say "We are South African!"

"Yes, but are we Indian or Zulu?"

"We are South African!"

"Yes, but what ARE we?"

"Ask your father" is not a grown-up response and, at six, she is far too young for a dissertation on race and why, as South Africans, disowning racial identification is a rejection of our apartheid past.

My child's identity crisis does not result from her being the offspring of that quaint terminology, mixed parentage. Both her parents are so-called Indian, but both have political problems with the labelling. Her insistence comes instead from a little South African game which has replaced Ring o' Roses on the playground – a throwback to our racist past where racial identification was necessary so we could work out our role in the pecking order.

This debate is, however, broader than the playground. This question of racial identity is also being debated by young, progressive so-called Indian people post the 1999 elections.

Fed by the academic analyses of how Indians voted against the majority, and how this race group finds more in common with a political party in which the white right seems to have also found a home, and a party led by a man whose domestic troubles are far more exciting than his election campaigning, much debate is ensuing about where "we", as a group, stand in this rainbow nation of ours.

An Indian friend of mine, a real Indian from India, calls this group "South Africans of Indian origin" and is amazed that a group of people could have lived in a country for five or six generations and still assume the identity of another country. It sticks in my throat to identify myself as Indian. As respected human rights activist Dr Phyllis Naidoo recently put it: "I am South African. India does not pay my pension."

Like people of any racial, cultural or ethnic group, I have difficulty with being a stereotype.

I owe no allegiance to India, have no wish to make a pilgrimage to the little village of my ancestors' birth, have no plans to settle in India one day and would be at a complete loss should the Idi Amin solution to South Africa's race problems be presented to me.

This does not mean I reject what most would call my cultural heritage. I still consider the sari or punjabi the most appropriate choice for important weddings and functions, I make a mean gulab jamun and I love Diwali and the lighting of the clay lamps.

But, except for a smattering of colloquialisms (most of them unprintable in a family newspaper), I speak no Hindi, no Tamil, no Gujerati and in my one wonderful visit to India I was immediately identified as a foreigner because I did not speak with a gentle roll of the head from left to right as I answered questions.

Just the notion of keeping "our" schools Indian, "our" townships Indian and "our" playgrounds exclusive is anathema to the concepts of equality to which I subscribe.

I might, perhaps three times a year, head for the Blue Lagoon for a bunny chow with the rest of the charous but I also hang out at Roxies, the Royal Hotel, Grillroomcafé, the Rainbow in Pinetown, the Bat Centre and Mo's Better Noodles. I make a better roast leg of lamb (the trick is in the generous use of cloves) than a mutton curry and I absolutely refuse to bring samoosas for my boss twice monthly.

The reality is that all Indians do not own corner shops. Many are working class and sadly this is where most of the fear and suspicions of an African majority reside.

All upwardly mobile young Indian women do not "aspire" to marry white men.

All Indians don't aspire to drive BMWs or live in white suburbs, go for elocution lessons and assume white accents or get put through technikon or varsity by rich daddies.

And all Indians are not Indians.

At the risk of being cliched and falling victim to the corny notions of rainbowism and new South Africanness, some so-called Indians are South Africans first.

And right now those South Africans are embarrassed at being lumped with a group of people who chose as their identity a country 8 000km away from the country they know as home.

Those South Africans are ashamed to be identified with a group of people which has, in its ranks, those who find a home in political parties which forbade their use of amenities and denied them access to education and the economy.

Those South Africans are ashamed to be lumped with a people which feels threatened by a future which they should be helping shape and determine.

Drop that laager mentality

ISSUE

South Africa is big enough for all of us: That's the message from the government as it intensifies efforts to get minority communities to participate in the country's political life. Deputy Editor Shami Harichunder examines the issue

Former president Nelson Mandela at Saturday's meeting in Durban. At the same table is Kerishnie Naicker

Post-apartheid South Africa has not produced a more onerous debate than the one around minority political apathy and the Indian community's lack of support for the former liberation forces.

In the eyes of the African National Congress – the group leading attempts to reverse this situation – the prevailing attitude, which has manifested itself in increased support for the predominantly white opposition parties, reflects at worst a lack of commitment to our new democratic order and, at best, opposition to political transformation.

Both assumptions are as inaccurate as predictions made in 1994 by so-called specialists of large voter gains by the Pan Africanist Congress. Six years on, the PAC, through declining support, has been virtually pushed into political oblivion. The ANC's reasoning, influenced by a combination of emotion and an arrogant assumption, puts those who did not vote for it in our two all-race elections in the category of the unpatriotic and ungrateful.

It is true that there was increased Indian support for the Democratic and New National parties in the most recent election, and this was at the expense of the ANC. Contrary to the ANC's view, this occurred as a result of an hysterical reaction to affirmative action, concern about other equity laws, assumptions that the liberal values of our constitution have provided fertile ground for the spiralling crime wave and a belief that state graft is worse now than it had been when the National Party was in power.

Virtually all of the reasons for the swing away from ANC are based on minority fears and anxieties, fuelled by propaganda from the likes of the New National Party and DP. The bottom line is that they are baseless, and the ANC must take some of the blame for creating this situation because of its failure to address, unambiguously, issues of great concern to minorities – such as affirmative action and other policies that have changed the racial pecking order of the past. What remains as an undisputed fact, however, is that pre-1994, the Indian community, while it felt the weight of racist laws, was handed out more by the National Party and its lackeys than African people.

It is this change, which has had an impact on the community's daily life, that has also contributed to waning interest in politics and a scramble towards self-marginalisation.

It is against this backdrop, and opposition gains in last year's elections, that the ANC initiated a series of meetings with members of the Indian community. The most recent, held at the request of Nelson Mandela and co-ordinated by former Miss South Africa Kerishnie Naicker, took place last Saturday night.

It is abundantly clear that the ANC regards seriously its loss of support in the Indian community, which was historically part of the liberation struggle. It wants, through interaction with decision-makers, to try to change the present state of apathy and disillusionment and draw the community back into the wider political scene.

Durban business community leader Eggie Naidu, known to have close links with senior government and ANC officials, hosted last weekend's indaba which drew about 30 professionals. He described the exchange between Mandela and those present as frank, although much of the discussion revolved around personal needs and experiences, as opposed to an understanding of sacrifices that would have to be made to correct some of the wrongs of the past.

National interest

"It is quite clear that much of the negativity we are seeing has been influenced by a range of factors, including people's personal experiences in the job market and their changed socio-economic situation. To create a better future, they have to see what is in the national interest, as opposed to what is in their personal interest. The political dynamics of the country have changed, and so has the government's priorities," said Naidu.

"To provide for the disadvantaged what is due to them, sacrifices have to be made – and we have to accept this. It serves no purpose withdrawing into a corner and shouting discrimination, or even voting for the opposition to register disapproval. That does not solve the problem.

"What is needed is for people to re-enter the mainstream political situation and believe in the future. All of us have a contribution to make."

He said Mandela welcomed views on whether the community believed the government was going wrong in the manner in which it was communicating its policies. But at the same time he spelt out the effects of the community's marginalising itself. "He made it clear that if the community succeeded in this, it should not complain later. We have no choice but to actively participate in the country's political life," said Naidu, who has on numerous occasions acted as a "Mr Fixit" for the country's top brass, including Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma.

Naidu also said some senior government leaders could not understand why a community with an impeccable track record for political equality and fair play had voted in such large numbers for some opposition parties – which, through their actions, were now leaving the impression that they were obstructionists in the path of transformation.

That interpretation of the role of the opposition may or may not be correct, but that is beside the point in the bigger political picture, which has now been clearly sketched. The bigger picture has ample room for minority groups – Indians included – to enter it, take their rightful place as South Africans and contribute towards a better society in a constructive manner and as valued partners.

Whether these minority groups are opposition supporters or not should be of no consequence in a democracy. What is important, though, is that they exit the laager they have withdrawn into or face the prospect of excluding themselves from decision-making.

They will have much to lose if they choose to remain on the sideline and watch as cynical observers.

Indians at crossroads

SILENT TENSION: Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the minister of home affairs, prays with a group of Indian women. But the relationship between Indians and blacks has not been as amicable as this event suggests. *Picture by Reuters*

> The community needs to reassess its relationship with black Africans in the new South Africa, writes MARLAN PADAYACHEE

THE controversial song *Amandiya* by playwright-singer Mbongeni Ngema could threaten the tenuous relationship between Indians and Zulus in KwaZulu-Natal.

The song questions the allegiance of South Africa's million Indians to the new democracy and highlights the plight of the economically marginalised African people.

Silent tension does exist between these two groups and the song has renewed an old enmity.

Rather than shooting the messenger outright, though, shouldn't South Africans of Indian origin, a hybrid of indentured sugar cane labourers, traders and merchants, pause to review their stance towards black African people?

Did the propaganda of apartheid's vicious social engineering system turn Indians into a racist rightwing enclave, reactionaries or mere insulated observers of a political system?

Amandiya is a general outburst against Indians, typecasting them as a group who "do not want to change, whites were far better than Indians", but the song has once again thrown the spotlight on relations between Indians and Africans.

The lyrics go on: "The reason we are faced with hardship and poverty in Durban is because everything is taken by the Indians. They turn around and exploit us."

The song also questions the fickle and apathetic voting tendencies of the Indian electorate in the historic 1994 and 1999 general elections. This voting bloc placed bets on the ruling ANC, the opposition NNP and the Democratic Party. The pro-Indian Amichand Rajbansi also enjoyed the spillage

of a community uncertain of its future under the African sun.

The dust is hardly likely to settle on this contentious issue, which cost a Zulu-speaking editor his career for reminding local Indians how the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin squeezed the Asians out of Kampala.

Ironically, a liberal black editor was also believed to have been transferred abroad after he tried to introduce a dialogue on Indo-African relations.

Thereafter, attempts to set up an African-Indian race relations institute in Durban failed miserably, despite the involvement of the Anglican Bishop Rubin Phillip, Fatima Meer and Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The ANC was left out of the indaba, much to Nelson Mandela's disappointment.

Indians have a rich history of having walked side by side with the African people in the liberation struggle.

But South African Indians have largely missed a golden opportunity to integrate themselves into our evolving non-racial democracy.

Indians have resisted racial oppression and exploitation ever since they arrived in Natal in 1860 as humble indentured sugar cane labourers.

Indian coal miners first marched against the colonial authority in 1906 to gain entry into the Transvaal.

Mahatma Gandhi led a march to the Natal-Transvaal border in 1913.

In 1946, thousands defied the anti-Indian Land Act, and thousands joined the defiance against unjust apartheid laws in 1952.

But the Indian-African riots in Durban in 1949 created a mistrust between Indians and Africans that has never been properly reconciled.

The psychological effect of the rioting virtually isolated Indians from politics, leaving only the stalwart anti-apartheid activists of this community to push on with the struggle to eliminate racism.

The legacy of political resistance landed dozens of Indians on Robben Island with the Mandelas, Sisulus and Ndebeles. Many were forced into exile. A few were slain in cross-border incursions with the apartheid security forces.

In the early years Indians were integral to the emerging labour movement.

After establishing a strong foundation in our liberation history, Indians began blowing hot and cold as the apartheid regime enticed them into the tricameral

system.

Though only 12 percent voted for this race-based and illegitimate form of parliament, the freedom-loving African people had taken note, as they did of the black homeland leaders of the TBVC banana states.

The strategic manipulation of apartheid administration and propaganda then contributed to a new class divide between Indians and the African people.

Since the 1980s Indians, though hard-working by nature and tradition, had been ensconced in the apartheid larder and progressed to new economic heights.

The political miracle of the democratic election in 1994, which set the apartheid state on the road to democracy, began the steady withdrawal of Indians from the sociopolitical mainstream.

Flummoxed by the ANC government's affirmative action jobs policy, terrified by the dramatic rise in post-apartheid crime, particularly vehicle hijackings and armed robberies, Indians gradually slipped into their cultural laager.

Then the identity crisis set in.

A community with a double-layered identity of looking to India for its spiritual, religious and cultural succour and to South Africa for its economic wellbeing and

security has reached the crossroads.

Have Indians become so disillusioned with a rapidly changing society in which black people have the political crown and whites the economic crown jewels, that they have become mesmerised by the social latitude between Bollywood and the Blue Lagoon?

Political research on the Indian sub-group reveals that prejudice against Indians has been inadvertently reinforced by the Indians themselves through their custom of holding themselves culturally and economically apart.

Indians are so cocooned in their religious, cultural and economic fervour that they appear to be lethargic or reluctant to get involved with the harsh realities of a post-apartheid democracy.

Most Indians are working-class to middle-income earners, and thousands live below the poverty datum line.

But the overwhelming wealth of the business and trading classes – dubbed the Amabenzi and AmaBMW – has resulted in the perception in *Amandiya* that Indians in the main are a wealthy, businesslike and self-serving minority group.

The way to reach the Freedom Charter's liberation dream of non-racial democracy, peace, unity and prosperity in our multicultural diversity is for the Indian community to face up to the new challenge of consolidating its agenda, clarifying its identity, realigning its politics, developing a new leadership and working towards meeting the African people half way – socially, politically and economically.

■ *Padayachee is a politics writer in Durban*

'The thing we share is our humanity'

OUR constitution guarantees cultural, religious and linguistic rights, but not ethnic/racial rights. Aline John is right: Indians are not a culturally homogeneous group (August 11 2002).

Muslims have an Arab/Islamic world view; Indian Christians have an outlook and values that are Western/European; Hindus uphold an ethos and perspective that is Indian. The only thing we have in common is race/ethnicity and not lifestyle and culture.

Those of us who are culturally Indian (of Vedic heritage) have a world view very different from people of the Judaea-Christian world – even if they are really Indian. The only thing we share is our humanity, which we share with the rest of the world, not our culture! "A man is what his faith is" (Gita - 17:3).

Some Indians use "culture" to form some kind of ethnic laager, isolated from mainstream events in South Africa. Why are Indian Christians, such as Natalie Rungan, Melvin Peters, Krijay Govender, Candice Moodley, Pat Pillay or Strini Pillai not part of mainstream South African society? Why do

CANDICE Moodley (left) and Krijay Govender

they give the impression that they are part of the Indian cultural scene, or allow Saira Essa to portray them in this way?

So many Indian Christians pretend they are culturally Indian, clinging to our kurta tails and sari pol loos.

So, who are the ones who are really having "an identity crisis"?

For instance, in an article in the Daily News (November 26 2000), Krijay Govender said she found the idea of cultural iden-

tity "ludicrous" and that Madonna was "more of an Indian" than she was. Yet, on April 22 2001, she proclaimed on *Eastern Mosaic:* "My Indianess is a deep and sophisticated thing".

If Eugene Terreblanche had said such a thing about his ethnicity, it would have been construed as extreme racism.

Whenever there is a national function or event, Hindus try to become involved, making a cultural contribution in the form of

dance, music, singing, etc. Often, these activities are linked to fundraising, such as when Indian dance and music schools put together a show on August 3 in Gauteng, to raise funds for the Alexandra Health Centre and University Clinic.

Hindu organisations such as the Ramakrishna Centre and The Indian Academy have given awards to outstanding achievers of all races in certain fields.

These are modest Hindu contributions and attempts to identify with the new South Africa.

Can Aline John say what the Indian Christians have done to identify with the new South Africa? What makes her say that Hindus "claim allegiance to India"? Can't she understand that what Jerusalem is to those with a Christian heritage, and what Arabia is to those with a Muslim heritage, India is to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs? It is our Holy Land.

African Americans arriving in South Africa proclaim their joy on "coming home". Nobody accuses them of lacking patriotism to America.

B PILLAY
Verulam

One woman's road to discovery

Research has taken a woman on a fascinating journey, writes Megan Power

WHEN University of Natal master's student Aline John embarked on a study of Indian identity three years ago, she was accused by many in her community of perpetuating "Indianness".

Ironically, in persevering with her research, she has discovered her "Africanness".

This week, the 27-year-old student from the university's School of Life and Environmental Sciences, presented her findings to delegates at the International Geographical Union regional conference held at Durban's International Convention Centre.

Titled "...an Indian is a meaningless concept. Being Indian in Durban: competing discourses", John's paper portrayed the city's Indians, particularly the Hindu community, as experiencing an identity crisis.

"It's a very sensitive issue. Even asking certain questions during my research was difficult. The Indian community is complex; it's not as simple as it's made out to be," she said.

The presentation formed part of a larger study of struggles over Indian identity in the public sphere between 1999 and 2001. John's paper identified three mindsets, all indistinct and overlapping: "Indian" is a meaningless concept; cultural fundamentalism, and double-layering.

Broadly speaking, those in the first camp argue Indians should discard Indianness because they have no link to India; those in the cultural fundamentalism camp, largely older, claim to be Indian by virtue of their beliefs, customs, religion and culture. Those who display the double-layering mindset claim allegiance to India, but also acknowledge their African roots.

"The double-layering discourse is the ideal. These Indians subscribe to the rainbow nation rhetoric, but also attend Hindu prayer meetings and temples. They accept their Africanness but, at the same time, preserve their culture," said John.

John, who has a Christian and Hindu background, has grappled with issues of identity for many years.

"I've always been interested in the questions of who I am and where I belong," the Phoenix resident said. "Years ago, when I went to London, people couldn't place me. I didn't look like an African to them. When I went to India, they thought I was Sri Lankan," she said.

"Many in the community, however, said I was letting them down by perpetuating Indianness. And some said I was presenting only a middle-class point of view," she said.

John said she had tried not to sensationalise or exaggerate the issue, and was merely describing the tensions, not saying what was right or wrong.

"It was more a personal journey for me," she said. "I discovered that I'm more South African than I thought I was. But I'm beginning to feel the brunt of affirmative action and I'm in a bit of a quandary about it," she said.

John said although unemployment and affirmative action were highlighting Indian identity, the end of apartheid had caused a similar crises in other groups as well.

"But a lot of work around identity still needs to be done. Indians have been stereotyped over the years; it is not a homogenous community," said John.

power@nn.independent.co.za

> ## I've always been interested in who I am and where I belong
>
> *Master's student, Aline John*

STUDENT Aline John has been criticised for her research into Indian identity
Picture: MEGAN POWER

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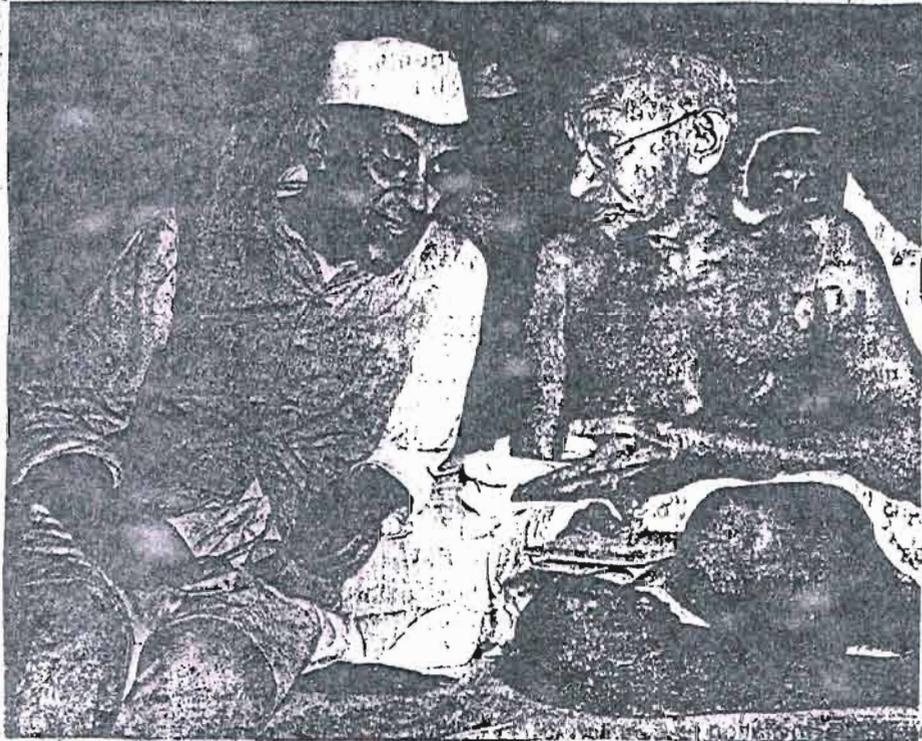
"The work Gandhiji started in S.A. has not yet been completed"

Rajiv Gandhi
Indian Prime Minister

The South African delegation that has travelled to India to discuss the cultural boycott and the struggle against apartheid has received a rousing welcome. The Indian government has given them the same status as that given to representatives of foreign governments.

The delegation which includes representatives from the Transvaal Indian Congress, Natal Indian Congress and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, was joined by the African National Congress in India. Unfortunately the United Democratic Front's representative, Titus Mojefe, was unable to join the other delegates because of transport difficulties.

In India the delegation was enthusiastically received by government officials, anti-apartheid solidarity groups, trade unions and a host of other organisations. Press people and T.V. crews have been trailing the delegates throughout the visit.

They have held meetings with the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, the minister of External (Foreign) Affairs, Mr. P.N. Naharsima Rao and have addressed MP's at a luncheon organised in their honour in Parliament.

In a moving ceremony, Mr. Cassim Saloojee, of the TIC and Mr. F. Gona of COSATU, placed a wreath on behalf of the delegation at Mahatma Gandhi's graveside. The site of the grave was closed to the public for an hour to allow for the ceremony to take place in peace - an honour usually reserved for presidents, foreign ministers and special representatives of the governments. They also went to the gravesides of Pundit Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

PAKISTANI GOVT. WELCOMES IDEA OF TALKS

Although the Pakistani government has welcomed the idea of talks with the South African delegation, a meeting between the two parties has not yet been finalised.

Difficulties have been experienced because Pakistani government officials are not presently available. The Pakistani government is hopeful that talks could be arranged before the delegation returns to S.A.
If this fails an official of the Pakistani government has assured members of the delegation that they would receive an official invitation to Pakistan within the next few weeks.

In the meantime, the Mauritian government has expressed keen interest in meeting the S.A delegation and has officially invited them to Mauritius. It is certain that the delegation would spend at least 2 days in Mauritius before returning to S.A.

MEMBERS of a South African political delegation hopefully Pakistan are from the left Mr. Fred Go Govender of the NIC, Mr. Cassim Saloojee, pre and Mr. Reggie Vandeyar, an executive committe

CALL FOR A SINGLE PARLIAMENT IN S.A.

"Nothing short of a single parliament" with every adult having the vote will satisfy India that South Africa has changed", said Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to the South Africa delegation visiting India.

The Indian Premier, Mr. Rajiv Gandi, made it clear that unless eery South African has the vote there will be no peace in S.A.

He re-affirmed India's commitment to the international campaign against apartheid and said that India was prepared to do everything possible to bring a peaceful resolution to South Africa's problems.

He emphasized that the people of India owed a debt to the struggle against apartheid: The struggle for independence in India was born in South Africa. "Who knows that if Gandhi had not been exposed to the shock of apartheid, India's history might have taken a very different course."

Mr. Gandhi was very keen to hear about the plight of the hunger strikers. He was disturbed to hear that some ex-detainees were restricted for up to 20 hours a day and were restricted to call at the police station twice daily in the remaining four hours.

he also focussed attention on the position of the Indian community in S.A. and said that they should participate more actively "in the great South African liberation struggle".

INDIAN GOVERNMENT REJECTS H.O.D.

During a meeting with the Minister of External Affairs (Foreign Affairs), Mr. P.N. Naharisma Rao, the delegation from S.A. was clearly told that the government of India rejects participation in the H.O.D.

He referred to those who participate in the HOD and similar structures as "collaborators" and said: "You cannot change the system from within. There is nothing there to change".

He added that the Indian government was keenly awaiting the results of the forthcoming elections for the HOD in September.

Mr. Alfred Gonsalves, the first secretary for Africa, stated that India had, in consultation with the ANC, drawn up a blacklist of those who participated in the HOD in 1984. However, he said there were practical difficulties in implementing this policy and called on the NIC and TIC to assist.

He said that only if they had full personal details of HOD members they would be unable to act against them.

He emphasised though that Mr. Pat Poovalingum was not welcome in India.

that left Durban today for a visit to India and
...na, a vice-president of COSATU Mr. Charm
...ident of the TIC, Mr. Yunus Carrim of the NIC.
e member of the TIC.

MF is 'saving future generations'

MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER

Dear Friend
Fighting for rate and tax payers, as well as the disadvantaged in our communities, we have become all too familiar with how our local government must be changed. We have paid a price for a system created by politicians who have resisted change. I am appealing to you today with a message of change and hope for our cities. In the past 5 years that my party has represented you in the councils, we have proven without a doubt, to be the undisputed and unchallenged voice of the poor.

The Minority Front has constantly waged a battle for the disadvantaged, demanding among other things **"FREE SERVICES TO THE POOR".**

The fight is far from over and I urge you to unite and put your faith in the Minority Front so that we may secure the future of our children and create a truly brighter life for all communities. I ask you to help my team of dedicated councillors to continue the fight for all our people by giving my party your support on election day - December 5, 2000.

This election is about our future. Help the Minority Front continue it's fight to make a difference.

Sincerely

C. Rajbansi

Amichand Rajbansi (Leader - Minority Front)

Helping people during the Inanda Riots

A. RAJBANSI - MAN OF COURAGE AND CHARISMA
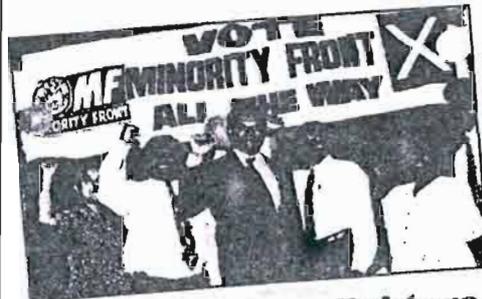
" The tenacious fighters with GUTS who really fight back !"

VOTE MF ON ALL BALLOT PAPERS

NAME OF WARD CANDIDATE	MF	MF	X
AND			
MINORITY FRONT	MF	MF	X

VOTE MF ALL THE WAY !

" Bengal Tiger - Amichand Rajbansi played the key role in securing KwaZulu-Natal's Constitution..., bleary eyed after the 24-hour negotiations which secured a unanimous vote, one African National Congress MP remarked astoundingly that the Minority Front leader had 'saved democracy!"

Raj accuses DP/NNP alliance of racism

MF is 'saving future generations'
The Minority Front has not sold out to the ANC in its coalition

Fight poverty says Rajbansi

STOP WATER DISCONNECTIONS SAYS MF

Save the Lotus

Rajbansi to fight ban on shad

MF proud of what it has done

DA won't fool Indian voters, says Rajbansi
By ALAN COOPER
INDIAN

MF restored pride and integrity

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS : DIARY OF A FIGHTER

"Parties woo Bengal Tiger"

"I'll have them both for breakfast, lunch and supper," roars Bengal Tiger

"Whites top the DP's list"

"Nats are DEAD," says Pik Botha

"Nats and DP used to compete with each other how to trample the Indians," said Raj in parliament

"Nats and DP worry when white farmers are killed, as if Indian farmers have no souls," said Raj

Indian Government's view of the cultural boycott of South Africa

Rajiv Gandhi - Prime Minister of India

Ever since Independence, the Indian government has always been opposed to apartheid in South Africa. Since the days of Pandit Jawarlall Nehru, India has been in the forefront of organising International pressure against apartheid.

The Indian government recalls with pride that it was the country to isolate apartheid. Delegates from S.A. were told that India reaffirms this commitment and will continue to support the struggle against apartheid.

The cultural boycott is on way in which the international community hopes to force S.A. to change peacefully. India is one of the many countries that has firmly applied the cultural boycott.

One of the main aims of the South African delegation was to discuss the cultural boycott in greater detail with the Indian government. Before its representatives went to India, the NIC held extensive discussions with cultural and religious organisations on the question of the cultural boycott.

At these consultative meetings the NIC and the religious and cultural organisations agreed that the cultural boycott of apartheid should be strengthened but that this boycott should not unduly harm the cultural and religious progress of the community.

It was therefore agreed that the NIC visit India and discuss with the Indian government the need to apply the cultural boycott selectively. This would allow for specific religious, academic and cultural exchanges for the benefit of the community. Cultural and religious personalities should be allowed to come to S.A. in the interests of the community but not in the interest of apartheid.

The S.A. delegation arrives from India on Wednesday 17 May 1989 at 18h00 at the Louis Botha airport. JOIN US IN WELCOMING THE DELEGATES AT THE AIRPORT ON WEDNESDAY