

THEORISING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INDIAN DIASPORIC ACADEMIC WOMEN: STOIC ARBORESCENCE OR RUPTURING RHIZOMES?

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Global interest in diaspora seeks to represent and problematise the lived experiences of Indians dispersed from their motherland to various places across the world, highlighting their triumphs, challenges, ambivalences and contradictions. This paper focuses on theorising the lived experiences of first- and fourth-generation Indian diasporic academic women in South Africa through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of rhizomatic and arborescent systems. In this qualitative study, five Indian diasporic academic women presented selected stories or critical moments which tell of their experiences of living in South Africa during apartheid and since its dismantling. The findings indicate that for each of the women in the sample, apartheid and patriarchy presented particular challenges and that the contradictions and ambivalences of their lived experiences are mainly rhizomatic in nature, indicating moments of connection, rupture, multiplicities and mappings in horizontal and non-hierarchical ways. Traces of arborescence are also evident. Research on the phenomenon of the Indian Diaspora and women of later generations should be ongoing to map their rhizomatic experiences and explore whether elements of arborescence contribute to these experiences.

Keywords: Indian Diaspora, lived experiences, academic women, apartheid, patriarchy, rhizomatic, arborescence.

Introductory background

Viewing *Paradesi*, an Indian film with English sub-titles, was rivetingly disturbing for the first author whose diasporic Indian roots have rhizomatically ruptured in the African soil. The film *Paradesi*, a Tamil translation of the 1969 novel *Red Tea* by Paul Harris Daniel, is based on real life incidents that took place before India's independence during the 1940s and depicts the lives of poor, carefree villagers who are lured to work on tea plantations as slaves with no hope of freedom. Images of tea plantations in India and imagined depictions of the arrival of Indian ancestors in South Africa to work in the sugar cane plantations were mentally compared and piqued a disruption of sameness and difference in the first author. The history of the Indian Diaspora in South Africa is a fascinating saga of both suffering and triumph (High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 2002; Landy, Maharaj and Mainet-Valleix, 2003; Maharaj and Desai, 2009) and this article explores the lived experiences of selected Indian diasporic academic women in South Africa.

Etymologically derived from the Greek term *diasperien*, from *dia-*, 'across' and *-sperien*, 'to sow or scatter seeds,' 'diaspora' suggests a dislocation from the

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nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries (Braziel and Mannur, 2003:1). 'Indian Diaspora' is a generic term used to describe the people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India (HLCID, 2002). It also refers to their descendants. Since the arrival of Indians in South Africa, several generations have been rooted and flourished in South Africa, which highlights the ambiguities of some theorisations of diaspora, which literally and on a historical level (negatively) denotes communities of people dislocated from their motherland, but etymologically suggests the (more positive) fertility of dispersion, dissemination, and the scattering of seeds. Although the Indians who came to South Africa were disconnected from the cultural space of the motherland, they re-established the cultural spaces within South Africa.

Contrary to the common belief that Indians first arrived in South Africa in 1860, there is evidence of their arrival at the Cape from as early as 1653 and that since the early 19th century as many as 1 195 Indians were brought into the Cape Colony comprising 36.4% of the slave population (HLCID, 2002: 75). For the indentured labourers who arrived in South Africa to work in the sugar cane fields, their dislocation from their motherland occurred between the years 1860 and 1911 (Landy et al., 2003). Indian immigrants from Gujarat, who were mainly Muslim and Hindu traders, brought with them family and fellow villagers to work in their homes and shops (Maharaj and Desai, 2009). They set up retail stores and began to compete effectively with the more expensive stores run by whites. The arrival of professional Indians incurred recriminations and they were unceremoniously labelled 'coolies' (HLCID, 2002:77). Indians from different villages in India, with different religions and languages, brought different ethnicities to South Africa. For the Indians that arrived in South Africa, their establishment was far from welcomed, as the architect of apartheid, DF Malan, articulated in his manifesto that 'Indians are a foreign and outlandish element which is inassimilable' (HLCID, 2002:75).

Apartheid, or 'separateness', was the policy of strict racial segregation in South Africa from 1948 to 1994 (Norval, 1996) which forced Indians to live in specific group areas and restricted Indians to racially exclusive schools (Maharaj and Desai, 2009:243). In the context of South Africa these removals were *prima facie* political and served to maintain insular cultural spaces for Indians in designated locations, for example, Chatsworth. Unlike other diasporic communities of the world such as the Native Americans who were forcibly removed from their location to embrace the culture of white Americans in an attempt to assimilate or 'civilise' them in North America, Indians in South Africa were not subjected to a cleansing of their culture from their motherland and on the contrary were insulated from other cultures in South Africa. Maharaj and Desai (2009:243) argue that MK Gandhi played a significant role in consolidating Indianness that both looked to confront white discrimination and keep alive the idea of a broader identity with the 'motherland'.

During the apartheid regime, black leaders of the struggle were supported by Indian cadres. The HLCID (2002: 83) reports that Nelson Mandela once said, 'India came to our aid when the rest of the world gave succour to our oppressors ... India took up our battles as if they were your own'. Whilst Mandela and other black leaders embraced Indians as allies, this was not a general consensus amongst blacks who clashed with Indians. Maharaj and Desai (2009) investigated the history of the Indian Diaspora and the racial conflict by those who experienced it. These authors elaborated on poor perceptions of the Indians by other races in South Africa as well as the dilemmas experienced by Indians who were denied redress in the form of affirmative action provisions since the fall of apartheid.

While apartheid served as an insulator for the Indian culture, democracy served to expand the societal boundaries making access to other cultures more permeable. The later generations of Indian Diaspora with greater access to white integration has resulted in a dilution of their 'Indianness'. Ela Gandhi, former MP (ANC), granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, summed up her Indian South African identity as follows: 'I am South African, a very proud South African. The Indianness comes from a 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 tastes and habits. What I am basically saying is that this is where the Indianness stops' (HLCID, 2001:84). Landy et al. (2003:213) however, report that the Indian 'identity' is still very much alive in Durban (South Africa). These authors add that despite some vanishing elements such as vernaculars, religion (Hinduism and Islam) and culture (films, music) remain two important markers of identity.

Hall (2003: 233) theorises two ways of looking at 'cultural identity': first, identity understood as a collective, shared history among individuals affiliated by race or ethnicity that is considered to be fixed, stable; and second, identity understood as unstable, metamorphic and even contradictory – an identity marked by multiple points of similarities as well as differences. While the first theorisation is similar to Deleuze and Guatarri's (1987) argument about an arborescent system, the second theorisation bears a strong resonance to their theorising of a rhizomatic system. Deleuze and Guatarri's (1987) lens of arborescent and rhizomatic systems metaphorically associated with roots and growth present possible explanations for the lived experiences of the Indian diasporic subjects. Whilst the term arborescence has connotations of tracing, structure and pre-established paths of growth, the term rhizomatic suggests variations, ruptures, multiplicities and a mapping of new uncharted pathways of growth.

Objectives

In addition to diaspora being a vibrant area of research, especially within the sphere of globalisation, there is a call for theorisation of diaspora that is not divorced from

historical and cultural specificity (Braziel and Mannur, 2003:3). Within the context of the historical and cultural diversity of South Africa's 'rainbow nation', this study offers nuanced glimpses of the lived experiences of selected first- and fourth-generation Indian diasporic women.

In exploring the lived experiences of diasporic Indian academic women, full cognisance must be given to the historical context of apartheid and its subsequent abolishment. During the apartheid period, the larger politics of discrimination, lack of freedom and opportunity faced by the Indian diasporic communities were compounded for Indian diasporic women who were further burdened by the domestic politics of patriarchy.

For the authors, who are themselves Indian diasporic women in academia, the shared experiences of other diasporic women not only test personal theorisations of diaspora but respond to global interest in diaspora that seeks to represent (and problematise) the lived experiences (in all their ambivalences, contradictions, migrations and multiple traversals) of people across the globe.

Gender, with regard to the Indian Diaspora, is far from a neutral construct especially within the cultural heritage of patriarchy. With regard to gender issues, Appadurai (2003: 42-43) observed that women in particular may become pawns in the heritage politics of the household, and are often subject to the abuse and violence of men who are themselves torn between heritage and opportunity in shifting spatial and political formations.

Without intending a feminist or anti-feminist slant in this paper, the choice of academic women dispels an overwhelming focus on victimhood and oppression. For these women, globalisation through technological development means that South Africa is not the sole space of acculturation. These women travel around the world and further; Braziel and Mannur (2003) point out that the boundaries of local/global diaspora, like those of nation/diaspora, are no longer clearly distinguishable. As Indian diasporic academic women they are removed from the confines of the space of a home and do have a global impact on the world at large through their work as university academics. Through technology they have access to world knowledge. Cognisance should be taken of their global interactions, a factor that further highlights the tension between 'cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation' (Appadurai, 2003: 31). As 'the shapes of cultures grow themselves less bounded and tacit, more fluid and politicised' (Appadurai, 2003:43), one can question or trouble the possibilities for cultural reproduction in the lived experiences of selected Indian diasporic academic women.

To what extent do these Indian diasporic academic women surrender to Indian cultural heritage, including patriarchy? For these women, is India still a key referent? To what extent, through their memories do they choose to preserve their inheritance of being 'Indian?' Appadurai (2003:42) aptly describes this dilemma:

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

To what extent are these selected Indian academic women in South Africa challenged either wilfully or through domestic politics to uphold cultural reproduction? This article portrays the lived experiences of these selected diasporic women which is a 'world in which both points of departure and points of arrival are in cultural flux, and thus the search for steady points of reference, as critical life-choices are made, can be very challenging' (Appadurai, 2003: 42).

Methodology

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

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

The researchers used a purposive sampling technique whereby subjects are consciously selected for 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:104). The sample of five participants comprised one first-generation and four fourth-generation Indian diasporic academic women. As university academics, four of these women hold doctoral qualifications and one is studying towards this qualification. The justification for choosing a sample of five Indian academic women increases the probability for the critique of patriarchy and other social issues. It can be argued that for these Indian diasporic academic women living in South Africa, their challenges were amplified as a result of gender and race.

The semi-structured interview sought to elicit data from Indian diasporic academic women. The following critical question was asked:

What are your lived experiences as an Indian diasporic academic woman?

The participants were asked to describe at least two critical moments as Indian diasporic women and the participant (teller-narrator) would respond by telling stories drawn from memory to the researchers (listener-audience). The narratives comprised a 'short topical story about a particular event' (Chase, 2008:59).

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

Data from the participants are explored via concepts of arborescent and rhizomatic, from the seminal work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The rationale for selecting Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) lens of arborescence and rhizomatic is to bring 'philosophy into closer contact with sociocultural issues' and to 'prompt the possibility of new questions and different ways of thinking research and data' (Mazzei and McCoy, 2010:504). The challenge presented to us as authors was to focus not merely on selected metaphors of arborescence and rhizomatic presented by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) but to illustrate these metaphors with examples from data. This paper explores further the characteristic principles of arborescence and rhizomatic systems in relation to the lived experiences of diasporic Indian academic women living in South Africa.

Theoretical Framing

In their seminal work, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) distinguish between arborescent and rhizomatic thinking. In botany, the term rhizome stems from the ancient Greek word *Rhizoma* which refers to a mass of roots. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) adapted this term to represent social systems that expand horizontally, producing multiple shoots that interlace through the system with the potential to break off and create or map new possibilities for growth. An arborescent structure, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is depicted in a metaphor of a root-tree which, characterises thinking marked by insistence on totalising principles, binarism and dualism, signifying unidirectional progress.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987:20) emphasise that '[T]he root-tree and canal rhizome are not two opposed models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing, even if it engenders its own escapes; the second operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map'.

The rhizome according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) 'itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extensions in all directions ... [t]he rhizome includes the best and worst: potato and couchgrass or the weed'. To highlight circular or cyclic unity as opposed to linear unity, Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 7-12) enumerate the six characteristics of the rhizome, which are the principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, assigning rupture, cartography and decalomania. These principles are briefly described in the paragraphs that follow.

The principles of connection and heterogeneity suggest that 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be'. A point of distinction is made from the tree or root, which plots a point and fixes an order (Deleuze and

Guattari, 1987: 7). Using these principles, we examine the extent to which the experiences of these Indian diasporic academic women are genealogical (following an inherited pathway) or anti-genealogical. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 8-9) argue that multiplicities are rhizomatic:

There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialisation according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities.

The principle of multiplicity highlights the variation of the paths selected by the participants including their perceptions and connection to the motherland. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:9) explain the principle of assigning rupture:

A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. There is rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another.

In analysing the lived experiences of the participants, the principle of rupture serves to highlight breaking or collapsing of structures as new paths are created.

Through the principles of cartography and decalcomania, Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 10-12) highlight that the rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model. The tree logic or arborescent thinking is a thinking of tracing and reproduction while the rhizome is a map. The rhizomatic characteristics of mapping and graphic arts emphasise the lines of flights or critical moments in the lives of these women who chose to design and create new paths instead of following pre-established paths.

In using the theoretical framing of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) arborescence and rhizomatic systems, these metaphors are intended to illuminate the experiences of Indian diasporic academic women and not position them into categories of preference or categories of positive or negative.

Case Studies

Devina: Being Voiceless to Asserting an Indian Voice

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

Her lived experiences of South Africa, the land of her birth, were marked by the historical and contextual realities. Apartheid, as a strategy of keeping different races separate, insulated the lives of those Indians living in diaspora. Devina lived in an Indian neighbourhood; went to an Indian school; studied at an 'Indian university' and taught at an 'Indian school'. Her marginal position as 'black' was accepted within the context of the historical-political stance of the country which encouraged subservience and fear of authority.

Being Indian, her first critical moment was when she was offered a secondment to lecture in a previously 'whites only' teachers' training college during the mid-1990s. This experience was indeed a culture shock for her. Her Indianness in a mainly white, racially constituted environment for the first time destabilised her notion of being Indian. Her Indian name was too long and strange sounding to the white community. Her accent was Indian and this further alienated her. The content of her conversation appeared to be inadequate. Her religion as a Hindu was openly attacked by a colleague who announced, 'For me, Christianity is the only religion.' Her silence further compounded the norm for intelligence was having the 'gift of the gab'. She indicated that she felt 'voiceless'. That was an uprooting experience for Devina. She felt dislocated for the first time having left her cocoon of Indianness. This is how she described her experience: 'I felt very much like a caterpillar whose cocoon was wrenched open prematurely – leaving me incomplete and vulnerable.'

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

She continued

I looked at the other Indians that succeeded in the institute and they were what are colloquially known as 'coconuts'. They were brown on the outside but were able to match the inner confidence of whites through their speech and general outlook. They twanged to the accent of whites. This confidence earned them the status of colleagues. I was an outsider.

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

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

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

To her, India was a place on the map that she imagined with much nostalgia as 'motherland' until her first visit to India in 2002 which affirmed her identity as an Indian South African. Yet she feels the pride of being an Indian diasporic Hindu

for the values that she feels abides by natural laws of living on this planet, let alone South Africa.

In the case of Devina, her experiences of living in South Africa are marked by ambivalences and contradictions. The socio-historical and political impact of apartheid was clearly challenging for Devina as an Indian diasporic woman. Her experience of other cultures was limited during the apartheid years and her first multi-cultural encounter signalled the need for new lines of flight towards academia to enhance her possibilities of survival in the field of education. She saw the need for academic studies which reflected strong western values and culture. Her rhizomatic development was most evident during her PhD studies when she chose not to follow tracings of typical western notions of acceptability and asserted her cultural identity as an Indian through her use of selected Sanskrit words such as *dharma* instead of using its Greek or English equivalents. This was a rhizomatic moment characterised as ‘acentered, non-hierarchical, non-signifying’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21) denoting a line of flight from a dominant culture.

Ruby: ‘It is an Indian thing. What will the family say? What will society say?’

Ruby, born in the mid-1960s, falls in the age category 45-50 and at the time of the research was studying towards her PhD. In describing her upbringing as an Indian, she emphasised the strong influence of her mother who, in her words, depicts ‘a typical Indian woman’ living in a patriarchal situation at the beck and call of her dominating husband. She said that although her mother had much potential, she was voiceless. Ruby explained that her mother’s entrenchment of the patriarchal way of life was passed onto her daughters which, Ruby reflected, did not stand her in good stead when she married and moved into a joint family system (living with her in-laws as well). For Ruby, the notion of an ideal Indian woman in the context of family acculturation meant being subservient to the needs of the males in the household. In her words, ‘literally you must wash the man’s feet’. To Ruby, this lived experience had been characterised by passivity.

She explained that Indian women have generally been trapped within a culture of what others would say. She said: ‘It is an Indian thing. What will the family say? What will society say?’ She described this especially in terms of marital relations where divorce is still regarded as taboo.

For her, a rupture occurred during her Master’s in Education studies. This is how she described the transformation: ‘My Master’s in Education made me break that shackles. It changed me in two ways: as a wife and daughter-in-law.’

She described the challenges of trying to fulfil her role as a wife as well as trying to find fulfilment in the workplace: ‘There is conflict about whether as an Indian woman you are expected to give all of yourself.’

She elaborated that the transformation that occurred during her Master’s in Education studies had developed her critical and analytical thinking, and presented

her with another way of looking at the world. These were the tools that she used to challenge patriarchy while leaving significant others to make adjustments as well. She explained:

I am just not the girl he married. I am evolving. The academia has empowered me to realise that being a passive Indian woman is a skewed understanding of being Indian. Speaking your mind is not disrespectful. I have moved to another level. My husband as well as my in-laws are gradually finding out who I am.

She felt that her lived experience of finally ‘breaking the shackles’ was not unique in that she had read of other Indian diasporic feminist women who write about the resentment of their lifestyle while living in India.

Although Ruby’s education has enabled her to develop rhizomatically, she explained that deep cultural and spiritual roots are still in India:

In terms of values, my guru is still from India. I subscribe to his teachings. That is very Indian and rooted in India. That link is still in India. Even though I have moved on academically, I have a broader perspective. My guru’s teachings make more sense. It is simple. My growth in terms of spirituality and the values that I espouse to is deeply rooted in India. I look at the Ramayan ... with my academia I can now understand it better. I am looking at the Bhagavad Gita and it is making more sense than ever. An important part of life draws from India in terms of spirituality and culture. It gives me a blueprint of my life.

For Ruby, breaking the shackles represents the lines of flight in terms of the patriarchy perpetuated in her home. Patriarchy (rule by fathers) is a social system in which the male is the primary authority figure central to social organisation, political leadership, moral authority, and control of property, and where fathers hold authority over women and children (Malti-Douglas, 2007). Instead of tracing the path laid out and enforced by her mother, she chose to recreate and map out her path rhizomatically. Academia provided her with the tools for critiquing the value of this patriarchy for herself and the confidence to modify her response to cultural expectations.

Ruby’s cultural and spiritual roots are arborescently embedded in India which provides for her a blueprint of her life. She is critical of the changing values of youth that she sees during visits to India but she herself sees the new value of ‘speaking out’ and asserting herself.

Reena: ‘India, the Land of the Gods and a Place of the Great Reverence’

Reena was born in the mid-1960s and she is a fourth-generation Indian diasporic woman living in South Africa. Her perception and experience of India are quite ambivalent as revealed in the following description:

India is some place that is far away from my life – a place that I just hold in great reverence. When I think of India I think of it somehow sentimentally. The gods chose to emerge in India. They chose to walk it. So for me it is the land of the gods and a place of great reverence.

She explains this ambivalence further:

My connectedness to India is linked to ancestry and religion.

In terms of social and other aspects of life, I feel quite removed. On holiday I struggle to adapt to the ways of the people ... If I had to return, I would basically go to places of pilgrimage but I don't think I would go beyond that.

While Reena does not align herself with the social aspects of India, she is appreciative of the values held by her forebears who came from India:

They had immense courage. I know that the people there are very resilient. Perhaps, because of their way of life in India shapes them to be resilient and that's the resilience my forebears must have had in order to venture to a foreign land and to survive very harsh and difficult conditions and to prosper not just to survive so that future generations can still reap the benefits.

She is grateful to her ancestors for their resilience and survival in South Africa, but at the same time she also finds that this inherited identity can be stifling in some respects.

The rupture comes from being forced to remove my gaze from the motherland and forced to shift my gaze to where I am. Numerous local challenges shift the gaze to address challenges.

The Indian identity has stifled my ability to progress somewhat. We stand in position of double disadvantage because of our race and gender.

The 'stifling' that Reena described was clarified by her presenting an example of an advertisement by a local rugby team, *The Sharks*, which states: 'Black and white, nothing else matters.' She explained this 'stifling' in terms of marginalisation as a result of race and gender during apartheid by the whites and the continued stifling by the blacks in the post-apartheid period who enforce the affirmative action policy that excludes Indians. Being neither black nor white, the Indian identity in her experience has not been given due significance to ensure progress.

Having said that, she went on to affirm that she is very aware of that identity but tries to work towards a position of strength: 'At work, you are forced to steel yourself, strengthen yourself if you need to move at all. That is not a bad thing.'

As far as patriarchy is concerned, even as an empowered academic woman, Reena chooses to adopt the traditions of her husband and wears the cultural markers of a married Hindu woman which are a *thali* (yellow string) around her neck and the red dot on her forehead, with great pride.

For Reena, India is a place of the gods which she holds in great reverence, yet she finds herself far removed from the people who live there. The socio-cultural and political context of South Africa forces Reena to focus on where she is rather than India as her motherland. She extracts what is good and valuable from her heritage as an Indian, taking cognisance of the qualities of resilience that enabled her forebears to survive in South Africa.

Roshni: ‘From Sari to Running Shorts’

Roshni holds a professorship at a university and falls in the 55-60 age category. She is a fourth-generation Indian diasporic woman. She describes a critical moment in her life when she and her family were removed from their place of birth: ‘My first moment of rupture occurred when as a child I saw my home being stripped to the ground and we were forcefully moved from the place of my birth.’

The community that Roshni refers to in the extract is that of ‘Cato Manor’ which is an evocative name in the province of Natal, and has powerful connotations with the history of the dispossessed in South Africa (Maharaj and Desai, 2009:250).

The history of settlement in Cato Manor is very complex, especially in terms of its race-class configuration of Africans and Indians. During the 1949 riots the racial conflict between the Africans and Indians led the state to justify its policy of racial separation (Maharaj and Desai, 2009:251). Roshni’s citing of the case of Cato Manor is reflective of various struggles in relation to keeping separate (apartheid) and its impact on the Indian community for ‘contested space’ in which various parties claimed authority.

The historical and contextual realities of apartheid became apparent to Roshni at an early age. She disclosed her rupture as an Indian woman compelled by cultural etiquette of the times to wear a sari and her subsequent reconstruction to create history in South Africa.

This is her story

My running – a meteoric jump from sari (which I wore exclusively for seven years) to shorts left me feeling pretty stripped and even as I took the first steps down my road, I could feel the eyes of the community piercing through my very soul! Being the first Indian woman [in South Africa] to participate in one of the most gruelling marathons in the world and ten times at that was a record for an Indian woman in the country. In all of the running experience, there was a silent dread that I will be observed by my mother-in-law as a trespasser against the cardinal rules of being at home and serving my husband. The only relief was an assumed logic of globalisation that assisted in redefining and recovering from this rupture. As more and more women joined [athletics] clubs, I became less and less visible, enclosed by the increasing numbers of women participating in this race.

According to Amin and Govinden (2012: 20), images of what Indian women wear are not neutral; they communicate notions of identity and of cultural values and of gender roles independent of the wearer’s notion. The sari, a rectangular piece of fabric worn with an underskirt and blouse, is the cultural dress for women in India (Amin and Govinden, 2012). The sari has been worn by Indian diasporic women since their arrival in South Africa and this tradition still continues. Although the sari is worn to places of worship as a mark of respect as a married Hindu woman, it can also be worn in a revealing, fashion-conscious way. Amin and Govinden (2012: 323) explain that there is a ‘binary logic in the way the sari veils and reveals, adorns and disrupts and signifies contemporary chic or reactionary conservatism’.

In the case of Roshni, the sari was worn to cover her body to demonstrate conservatism and her change to running shorts was indeed a rupture of cultural tradition in terms of dress.

For an Indian diasporic woman, the very act of running signifies a disruption from the strictures of the traditional home and the confines of patriarchy. Roshni's experience suggests that the rules of patriarchy itself were perpetuated by the very women whom it served to subordinate. The matriarchs of the family were strong disciplinarians who attached a value of decency to how well the patriarchal order was served in the family and community.

Neela: 'My Relationship with India is One of Resistance and also Attraction'

Neela, in the age category of 55-60, is also a university academic with a PhD. She differs from the other participants because she is a first-generation Indian diasporic woman whose parents came from Gujarat. She explained that her relationship with India is one of 'resistance and also attraction':

During apartheid at a time when we were not sort of accepted as South Africans and it was almost a sense of being in a no-man's-land ... not in India ... in South Africa but not in South Africa in a sense because you were not white.

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

After the dismantling of apartheid, she gained a greater sense of belonging to South Africa:

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

For Neela, as a first-generation Indian diasporic woman, the rootlessness experienced during the apartheid days was further amplified through her visit to India which dispelled the imagined sense of belonging to the motherland. For Neela, like so many other Indians living in South Africa, the collapse of apartheid instilled in them a sense of belonging and a proudly South African identity.

As an Indian diasporic woman living in South Africa, the insulation from specific communities served to compound the larger insulation of apartheid. Neela explained:

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

What gave me a little bit of an advantage was that the Gujarati Indian male changed his idea of a wife. He did not want an uneducated girl. They wanted a girl who finished matric or more if possible.

From Neela's experience it is apparent that the values of cultural communities were strong influences that shaped the way Indian diasporics lived in South Africa. She continued her story about the expectations of elders in her family that exerted control over the way she lived:

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

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

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

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

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

As an avid post-structuralist, she explained her experiences of patriarchy:

I describe my husband as a pragmatic patriarch. He is a patriarch at heart ... he wants to be head of the family ... he wants to make the decisions when it suits him for pragmatic purposes, for economic purposes; for social values, he will allow me certain privileges. He is not prepared to give up on patriarchy. And he will remind me many times that in terms of money power 'you may have the brains but I bring the money' and for him it is always that money equals better brain power. My brain power does not bring in that kind of money from academia.

This is how Neela theorised this experience:

It's really about the nature of reality. Zizek offers a wonderful tool to understand some form of reality and one of them he refers to as decaffeination. So it's like how you get decaffeinated coffee. Decaffeination means removing all the poison elements of a practice or whatever, in order to retrieve that which is less harmful. When I say that he is a pragmatic patriarch I try to remove the notion of a pure patriarch with all its injurious elements of oppression and so on. So, pragmatic patriarchy is a form of 'decaffeination'. In a sense my husband's sense of an academic is: 'Use your analytic tool and whatever to understand what you are doing at work and that should be left behind at work'. His views are: 'Use decaffeinated intelligence

in the house and that means, run the house, cook what I want, and serve me so that I am still entitled to my privileges as a patriarch.'

There are some things that I love doing for my husband not because he is a patriarch and he demands this but there are things that I want to do to express my love for him.

From Neela's story the link between patriarchy and power becomes apparent. Neela's academia allows her to analyse the patriarchy which she deals with, using Žižek's (2008) decaffeination theory to extract that which is poisonous about patriarchy. What is positive about Neela's approach is that she does not link patriarchy to victimhood and by using her academic tools she neutralises its control of power over her.

Discussion

The lived experiences of the Indian diasporic academic women were viewed through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concepts 'rhizomatic' and 'arborescent' which not only provided a metaphor and new means of description but also 'encourages different understandings or engagements that confront the very image of thought that guides us' (Mazzei and McCoy, 2010: 505).

Whilst arborescence denotes a structured path which is a defined set of points and positions, the rhizome is made up of lines of flight, multiplicities and changes in nature (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21). These authors explain that 'unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to the traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs and even nonsign states' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21). The philosophical use of the terms arborescence and rhizomatic enable a novel understanding of the lived experiences of Indian diasporic academic woman whose growth in South Africa cannot be adequately described as being solely arborescent or rhizomatic. What is significant is that arborescence and rhizomatic are not two opposed models and are not presented as axiological dualisms of good and bad. The findings indicate that while traces of arborescence are evident, the lived experiences of these Indian academic women are far from being structured, fixed and linear but have developed in unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory ways against the background of various ideologies, namely apartheid, democracy and patriarchy. The lived experiences of the Indian diasporic academic women, demonstrate a strong resonance with the rhizomatic principles of connectivity, heterogeneity, multiplicities, rupture, cartography and decalomania.

The principles of connection and heterogeneity which are characteristic of rhizomes indicate that the experiences of the participants can be best understood in relation to contextual realities of two dominant socio-cultural forces of apartheid and patriarchy. Apartheid as a mechanism of social engineering served to perpetuate insular cultures and subservience in South Africa. Subsequently, patriarchy as a genealogical component of the Indian culture was fostered within their communities.

Ruby laments about the accountability to the Indian community when she stated: 'It is an Indian thing. What will the family say? What will society say?' During the days of apartheid, subservience to community values also determined the experiences of the Indian diasporic woman.

Since the fall of apartheid certain aspects of the Indian culture are still arborescently enduring and are most evident in Reena, Roshni and Ruby's deep spiritual and religious link to India, despite living in South Africa. Both Ruby and Roshni have 'gurus' in India who guide their spiritual and religious growth. Although Reena viewed India as the 'land of gods' she ironically does not relate to the Indian people who live in India. Both Devina and Neela had imagined notions of their motherland and when they eventually visited India, their South African identity became more firmly endorsed. In each of the cases, the subject's connectivity to India is heterogenous and not structured in a pre-determined way.

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

For Neela, apartheid signified 'being in a no-man's-land ... not in India ... in South Africa but not in South Africa'. This indicated a sense of insecurity, uncertainty and ambivalence experienced by Neela in her land of birth. The dismantling of apartheid resulted in a rupture of how Neela experienced South Africa bringing about greater certainty. She felt a strong sense of belonging to South Africa when she heard its national anthem being sung at a conference in India thus affirming her identity as a South African of Indian descent.

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

Similarly, the impact of apartheid was described as a 'double disadvantage' for Reena in terms of race and gender. She indicated that her coping strategy of being in that position was to 'steel' and 'strengthen' herself so that she could locate and pursue opportunities for empowerment.

The principle of cartography and decalomania suggests that 'unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable,

reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:21). In relation to the lived experiences of Indian diasporic academic women, their very status as academics signifies a map of their own personal and career possibilities. The agency of these women in 'producing and constructing' their paths is highlighted despite the barriers in terms of socio-cultural and political forces.

With regard to patriarchy, for example, most participants have chosen a rhizomatic path to chart their own maps instead of tracing the already established paths. The findings indicate that for these women, there are still traces of arborescence in selected experiences. For Reena, however, traces of arborescence are evident as she consciously continues certain traditions passed on from her husband's family. Although patriarchy was entrenched as a way of life for Ruby, she has chosen to detach herself from that ideology. In Ruby's case, ruptures became evident as her academic development played a role in her modification of her position and role as wife and daughter-in-law. This applied to Neela as well, since academia enabled her to map her own path rather than follow the path that was expected of her by the elders in her family. Yet traces of arborescence linger when she herself has to decaffeinate the intellectualism of academia in order to negotiate the space of patriarchy within her home. Similarly, Roshni's metamorphosis from sari to running shorts signifies lines of flight from the expected notion of the Indian diasporic woman. While she acknowledges that her mother-in-law would have expected her to stay at home and serve her husband, she nevertheless does not reproduce this expectation but maps her own route through her running of challenging marathons. For Roshni, however, the fear of being observed by her mother-in-law presents a contradiction and highlights traces of arborescence.

Conclusion

The lived experiences of the sample of Indian diasporic academic women whose forebears worked in the sugar cane fields of South Africa represent an interplay between the rhizomatic and the arborescent. The value of using the theoretical lens of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987: 20) rhizomatic and arborescent models to explain the lived experiences of Indian diasporic academic women is to acknowledge that 'there are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots'. The rhizomatic model is an endeavour to explain the lived experiences of Indian diasporic academic women as a process of sustaining itself through perpetual collapsing and construction. These lived experiences are marked by connections, multiplicities, ruptures and mappings in horizontal and non-hierarchical ways. Against this sporadic rhizomatic growth, there are traces of arborescence emerging from these subjects' long-term memory (regarding family, race or society) that foregrounds these experiences. Perhaps, the trait of 'resilience of the forebears'

identified by one of participants is the arborescent thread that has enabled the rhizomatic development of subsequent generations.

The findings show that these women have undergone a metamorphosis as individual Indian diasporic women in different and complex ways from saris to running shorts; breaking the shackles of patriarchy; challenging western conceptions of knowledge; decaffeinating the pragmatic patriarchal husband and being decaffeinated as well. These are just some of the lived experiences of the Indian diasporic academic women who have mapped their lives through boundless ruptures or lines of flight instead of following the tracings of pre-established paths. These women have experienced the pull or lure of the deep spiritual and cultural ties to their motherland and are simultaneously gravitated towards their land of birth which they feel proud to be part of. The findings highlight that their paths have been strewn with obstacles such as ideologies of apartheid and patriarchy that have shaped the complexity, multiplicity and contradictions of their lived experiences as Indian diasporic academic women in South Africa.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 25) aptly describe the rhizome as having 'no beginning and end; it is always in the middle, between things'; therefore it is suggested that research on the phenomenon of the Indian Diaspora and women of later generations in particular be ongoing to explore the paths they take in their becoming [Indian]women.

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