South African Indians in Natal: The question of belonging, lived histories, and portraits.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my granddaughters: Natalie, Alaynah and Lyra Sadhai.

Abstract

This thesis draws on the life histories of eight South African Indian individuals, (six of whom grew up in Natal during the 1960s/1970s and two of whom grew up in the 1930s/1940s), to understand how they lived through, navigated and resisted the apartheid social order. Based on interviews and oral accounts, I create vivid portraits of their lives to discuss survival strategies of materially deprived South African Indian families, and forms of reciprocity and mutuality they lived by in the age of apartheid. Apartheid, for many South African Indian working-class families brought deep deprivation but also petty benefits, and relatively greater opportunities to access education and obtain social mobility. Mindful of that history, I mobilize family and individual portraits to address the so-called "Indian question" and reflect on their sense of belonging in South Africa. As we know, the divide and rule legacy of the colonial state, the grave hardships faced by the majority of South Africans and populist politics of othering, continue to fuel racial tensions between Black South Africans and South African Indians. Against this background, I describe the everyday lives and constructive contributions of South African Indians, to chart a meaningful and ethical mode of living, in the only place they call home. I conclude that, notwithstanding the many contradictions that exist in our 28-year-old democracy, South Africa remains as per the freedom charter, our country (all races), and that we have the power to effect changes in our everyday lives, though small acts of compassion and care—through Ubuntu.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

> "If the human condition were slavery, there would be no need for the institution of slavery. Conversely, if the human condition were freedom, there would be no need for constitutions and human rights. The human condition is the condition of humans carrying a heavy load of history on their shoulders and half – blindly choosing ways of making the load easier to carry" (De Sousa Santos, 2016: 12).

There are ambivalent reactions to Indian presence in South Africa. While Indians are seen by some as bona fide South Africans, having earned their place, through their brutal exploitation as indentured labourers, by the colonial plantation owners, still others (white electorate during colonial and apartheid rule), have called for their repatriation back to India. Over the years, a section of the Black population, have been questioning their right to belong in the post-apartheid South African nation. Stereotypes of the opportunistic, arrogant and dishonest Indian are kept alive, by people such as the playwright Mbongeni Ngema, the journalist Fred Khumalo, and the politician Julius Malema. [1] In a newspaper article, the journalist Fred Khumalo wrote about the relationship between Duduzane Zuma and the Guptas, in a manner that portrays all people categorized as Indian, as essentially corrupt. Duduzani Zuma is the son of ex-president Jacob Zuma, who together with the Gupta family from India (who are not South Africans of Indian descent and are therefore different from the participants of this study), were involved in state capture. In Khumalo's words:

> "The media should be commending poor Duduzane for being a fast learner: He realized that his good father became quite a comfortable man thanks to his friendship with Schabir Shaik, who just happens to be an Indian and a businessman. So Duduzane figured: ah, let me get myself my own Indian as well. This is nothing new, an Indian businessman finding a politically powerful darkie or vice versa. Nelson Mandela had his own Indians. You remember those chaps who started selling some pieces of paper with doodles on them to the art galleries under the pretext that the Old Man was the original

[1] The highly acclaimed song writer and playwright, Mbogeni Ngema, wrote a song called "Amandiya" in which he calls for Zulu men to take a stand against Indians who have taken everything, who exploit Black people and who are more racist than Whites. Julius Malema of the Economic Freedom Fighters has made anti- Indian speeches in which he states that the majority of Indians racist as is shown in their voting patterns and the low marriage rate between Indians and Blacks. (S'thembile Cele: City Press, 18 January 2018)

> artist? If such a powerful, reputable darkie-with-political-power could have his Indians, why couldn't a Zuma have his own Indian?" (2010).

Anti- Indian statements by public figures, serve to exacerbate the tensions between Africans and Indians, leaving Indians with feelings of insecurity about their position in South Africa. While this thesis is about the South African Indian sense of belonging/ citizenship, it is also about how South Africans of all races adjust the load of history and find a way to live together in the present, despite injustices of colonialism and apartheid. Marxist thinkers, who applied their minds to the national democratic revolution, regarded national liberation as the first stage of the struggle for liberation, that works only, if prosperity exists. They argued that during an economic crisis, there would be divisions along racial lines, and along foreign/native lines. For this very reason, thinkers like Harold Wolpe, disagreed with the 2-stage theory of liberation, where the first stage is based on race and the second on class. He argued that social transformation must happen together with national liberation, or else a Black bourgeoisie class, will emerge to dominate and exploit the Black working class, which simply has the effect of replacing the white oppressor, with a Black oppressor (1988: 63). This coincides with Fanon's thinking, when he said that the tertiary sector, (the deal making / tender sector) should be nationalized within hours of national liberation, to prevent the emergence of the greedy petit bourgeois class (2007: 185).

Since social transformation did not accompany national liberation, we find ourselves exactly in that position that Fanon, Wolpe and others predicted we would be in, where the oppressed fight among themselves, blinded by conditions of extreme poverty and deprivation, unable to see the wood for the trees. The major contradiction of the class struggle slips conveniently into the background, as the waters are muddied by issues of race and ethnicity, which serves the interests of the ruling elite. Against this backdrop, and amid racial conflicts that erupt from time to time, this thesis grapples with the right (or not) to citizenship, and sense of belonging of S.A. Indians. The antagonisms between the oppressed races, can be traced to the early 1880s, when shortly after their period of indenture, most free Indians chose to remain in South Africa, and were placed higher than Black people in the racial hierarchy, as part of the divide and rule policy, of the government of the day.

This created an environment of antagonism and disunity among the oppressed groups, which gave rise to three critical moments of rupture between the Black and Indian communities in Natal i.e., the 1949 Cato Manor Riots, the 1985 Inanda Riots and July 2021 Phoenix Massacre. By recounting the history of these events, I seek to outline the fractures that have marked African Indian relations in South Africa.

The 1949 Cato manor riots

The Cato Manor riots in 1949, were triggered by an assault of an African boy by an Indian shopkeeper, but the underlying reason for the antagonisms that led to the riots, lay with the government of the day, which divided the oppressed groups by giving petty privileges to Indians. According to Soske, "The fundamental and basic causes of the disturbance are traceable to the economic and social structure of the country, based on differential treatment of the various racial groups and the preaching of racial hatred and intolerance" (2017: 17). The riots started on January 13 in the Indian business district, where Indian owned shops were looted and damaged, and spread the next day to the Cato Manor residential area. The state, through their inaction seemed complicit. In Edward Webster's words, "A belief was widespread at the time of the riots that because of the Indian vulnerable position and openly hostile attitude taken by the Europeans to Indians that the Indians could be attacked with impunity - they had in effect become licensed scapegoats" (1974: 31). Indians were terrorized, assaulted, some were raped, some murdered, while others fled.

There are also many stories of Black people, who risked their lives to save Indian lives. Ronnie Govender's play "49" gives a poignant account of how a Black tenant, sacrificed his life, by trying to hide his landlord's family in his shack (Govender, 1996). This story resonates with many Indian families who survived the riots. My mother's family were saved by Black neighbours, and were among the 25,000 people, who became refugees in the city. My grandmother and her children escaped in a van. According to the stories told, the family were covered with tarpaulins and made to lie down at the bottom of the van, with random household items, such as pots and pans, pieces of furniture and boxes thrown over. A few courageous Black men (tenants on her plot), stood on the van's runner boards shouting out to anyone who asked, that they were carrying looted stuff. My mother's family (the R.N. Naidoo family) lost their home, 2 buses, and their livelihood during the riots, but escaped with their lives thanks to their brave Black neighbours.

The official figures for destruction of life and property were (Webster, 1974):

- 142 deaths (50 Indians, 87 Africans, 1 White, 4 unidentified)
- 1087 injured (503 Indians, 541 Africans, 32 Whites, 11 Coloureds)
- 247 houses destroyed
- 58 stores destroyed
- 1 factory destroyed
- 1285 houses damaged
- 652 stores damaged
- 2 factories damaged

Of the high number of deaths of Black people (87 deaths), there were reports in the newspapers that many Black people were killed as a result of police gunfire, as well as reports of Africans being killed while helping their Indian neighbours. There were reports too, of the use of firearms by some Indian men (Soske, 2017: 112). The antagonisms that existed between Indians and a section of the Black community, were linked to the political and economic context of the time. The government of the day frustrated Black economic advancement and social mobility, by passing laws that rendered them illegal in the city, thus preventing them from buying land in the city (they had access only to tribal land) or accessing business licenses. This forced Black people to interact with Indians as renters on their property, customers of their shops, and as commuters on their buses. The difference in material conditions of life between Africans and Indians, is arguably the most important factor in the antagonisms between the two races. According to Soske, 80% of land rented to shack dwellers was Indian owned, and half the African population of 132000, lived in illegal slums (2017: 53). One can understand the frustration and resentment that Black people felt towards all who contributed to their suffering. The most immediate group that they could identify, as contributing to their suffering, was the Indian landlord, Indian shopkeeper, and Indian bus owner, who sometimes exploited or overcharged Black people. While many Indians owned neither business, nor property, they were unfortunately painted in the same stereotypical brush, which contributed to the buildup of resentments between the races. The apartheid state, responsible for the racial laws, and differential treatment of the oppressed races was a far-removed entity. The antagonisms between the oppressed races on the ground, remains unresolved, and the differences in the degrees of material deprivation among the oppressed, continues. While African and Indian leadership came together in common struggle against the racist apartheid state, (working on the Defiance campaign in 1952; a campaign aimed at defying apartheid laws, and the Freedom Charter which was adopted in Kliptown in 1955), this unity did not always filter down to the people on the ground, where the daily experiences, and material conditions of life, were determined by race.

The 1985 riots

It is against this background of unresolved tensions, that protest action triggered by the brutal murder of human rights lawyer and UDF leader, Victoria Mxenge in August 1985, degenerated into racial violence. Initially the protest was student driven, these students, part of the Comrades movement, affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF), moved from school to school, encouraging more learners to join the protest. In the black townships, they targeted state assets, and homes and businesses of perceived state collaborators, for destruction (Desai, 2014: 51). In Inanda however, things were different. Protesting students were joined by other young people in the area, who threatened only Indian shopkeepers and residents, causing 1000 Indians to flee to Phoenix nearby. Within one week, 42 shops belonging to Indians were looted and burnt, and many houses were destroyed (Desai, 2014: 44).

The Inanda Riots occurred during the time when there was heightened political activity, and mobilization within the country. People were conscientized, and much work was done in the interim decades between 1949 and 1985, by progressive people of all races. The Black consciousness movement, under the leadership of Steve Biko, inspired the student uprising of June 16, 1976. The United Democratic Front (UDF) formed in 1983, brought together progressive organizations from all racial backgrounds and sectors, and is credited with highlighting the evil of the tricameral system, that sought to co-opt Indians into the state apparatus, whilst excluding the Black population.

While political leadership within the country, tried to downplay the racial tensions, by ascribing the violence to the apartheid state and opportunists, this does not explain as Desai points out, why the 1949 and 1985 riots targeting Indians, received such widespread support from the African population. An explanation could lie in the fact that Indians are sandwiched between the rich White elite, and the poor Black majority, and are within easy access when anger and frustration requires venting. Desai refers to this as the middleman minority phenomenon, leading them to become the perfect targets of popular anger (2014: 49). The violence in Inanda, was exacerbated by Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha, a political movement of the Zulus, viewed as a counter-revolutionary force, that colluded with the apartheid regime. Inkatha was affiliated with the Kwa Zulu homeland structure, and as such, worked closely with the apartheid state. Inkatha, the Kwa Zulu Natal administration, and the apartheid state, joined forces against the Comrades movement, in their efforts to bring back 'order' in Durban. In Ari Sitas's words, "The Durban explosion around August that year (1985) brought together Inkatha's urban power blocs, the KwaZulu administration and the apartheid state in an effort to 'normalize' the townships and to roll back the United Democratic Front's Street mobilization" (1992: 4).

Under the pretext of bringing back order in Inanda, Inkatha impis were sent into Inanda, and violence between the protesting youth and Inkatha, resulted in many deaths. After 3 days Inkatha gained control and property, and according to Desai, "Inkatha warlords then subdued the youth and began replacing absent Indian landlords…The interests of the warlords and Inkatha coalesced. The warlords wanted financial gain and power. Inkatha wanted to extend its influence in Inanda, and to consolidate Inanda into Kwa Zulu" (2014: 56).

Whilst many factors contributed to the violence in Inanda, there can be no doubt, that an anti-Indian resentment, reminiscent of the 49 riots was a big factor. This time round though, the differences in the material conditions of life (a cause of antagonism), between Indians and Africans, was not due to the Indian trading class, but due to the rise of the professional class, that started in the 1970's. The expansion of educational opportunities, the creation of an Indian university, at Salisbury Island in Durban, in 1962, resulted in many young people earning degrees, and entering professions such as

teaching, law, and pharmacy etc. (Desai &Vahed, 2019: 233-254). The rise of this professional class expedited the move of many working-class families into the middle class, which is evidenced by the extensions to homes in places like Chatsworth and Phoenix. According to research done by Beale (1998), as cited by Desai and Vahed, student numbers increased rapidly from 1,818 in 1970, to 14,216 in 1983 (2019: 248). The bigger houses, and visible improvement of material conditions of life, of South African Indians who were upwardly mobile though education, served to widen the gap between the oppressed racial groups, thus adding to the racial antagonisms.

July 2021 popular eruption

The trigger for the July 2021 eruption, which came in the form of attacks on shops, malls, and appropriation of goods backed by force and violence, was the fact that ex- president Zuma, who was found guilty of contempt of court for not presenting himself to the state capture commission, was given a 15-month term of imprisonment, and made to go to jail. Zuma's children, some supporters, and patronage networks, used social media to mobilize people to create a situation of anarchy and mayhem. Initially 35 trucks were torched on the national highway, South Africa's food and fuel route. This was followed by looting sprees and torching of shopping centres. While key players targeted ATM's, banks and safes, the impoverished and hungry people took the opportunity to obtain food and clothes and other household items. The destruction happened on an enormous scale, occurring in many places at the same time. There was no police presence for the first 3 of the 8 days of the eruption, and when they did make an appearance, it was clear that the situation was not within their capacity to control. At this point, the protests took on a racial tone, as there were reports of messages circulating on social media and Whatsapp® groups, that Indian homes should also be targeted. This led to the setting up of roadblocks at entrances to Indian townships, and to the emergence of vigilante groups. Among the reasons for the heightened level of fear were, according to Tolsi, "the collective memory of the 1949 riots …defined by murders, rapes and wounds of race and ethnicity that 27 years after the end of the racist and oppressive system, South Africa has yet to fully heal" (2021). Racial conflict seemed to be part of the plan, to add to the ensuing chaos and mayhem that prevailed. According to Qaanitah Hunter, Jeff Wicks and Kaveel Singh, instigation of conflict between the races, was indeed, a part of the master plan of those behind the failed insurrection. In researching the book *Eight Days in July*, they learned from key sources in the security cluster that the first step was to instigate looting and vandalism, and the second was to sow discord along racial lines. (2021: 192)

In the absence of police and army, Indian communities in Phoenix and Chatsworth, decided to protect their communities by taking the help of private security companies and manning roadblocks, and in the process vigilante groups were formed. These groups were responsible for the terrible deaths of some 30+ Black people, some of whom were seeking entry into the area, simply because they either

lived or worked in Phoenix, while others were passing through, and a few were people who had looted goods in their cars. Apartheid spatial planning, results in people continuing to live in racialized spaces, making it easy to identify a person of another race as not belonging, and as in this case, to their deaths. The deaths of Black people at the hands of vigilantes, contributes to the suffering of the families of those killed, adds to the Indian-African antagonism, and gives people like the leaders of the EFF, the opportunity to paint all Indians, in the vigilante/racist brush. But as Mervin Govender, of the Phoenix Resident's association, is reported as saying "people forget that Phoenix is a township. Criminals, gangsters and drug dealers also live here. Criminals live amongst us" (Laganpersad & Xolo, 2021). With these words, Govender was seeking to hold the said gangsters responsible for the deaths of Black African citizens. The case is sub judice, but it is evident that the riots of 1949, 1985 and 2021, all erupted under conditions of poverty, unemployment, hardship, inequality and frustration, and that these riots will occur in the future, unless our government puts in place pro-poor policies, and improve the material conditions of life of the masses.

The 1949 Cato Manor Riots, the 1985 Inanda Riots, and the 2021 Phoenix Deaths are all spectacular events that have occurred at intervals of decades, and while the different races seem to go about their lives relatively peacefully most times, these episodes speak to the underlying unresolved racial tensions, that need to be addressed. The impact of apartheid and colonial policies continues to be felt by the races as the inequality persists. An example of apartheid policy that has huge ramifications for the present, was the spending patterns in the important area of education. In 1976, the state spent the following amounts per child based on race: White child- R654, Indian child- R219, Coloured child- R157, Black child – R91 (Desai & Vahed, 2019: 237). This injustice is something that is difficult to recover from, as education is an important factor for social mobility. The material conditions of life, that many people of different races find themselves in today, traces back to the unjust policies of the past. Populist leaders capitalize on existing tensions, by making racially charged speech, tapping into the existing racial antagonisms, with the aim garnering political support and alienating South Africans Indians from South African nationalism. While some South African Indians have moved into the middle class, a significant proportion (especially those living in Natal), are descendants of the indentured labourers, and remain working class [2].

[2] A survey done in 1999 by Fatima Meer and the Concerned Citizens Group in Westcliff and Bayview Chatsworth, revealed that of the 504 families who participated, 75% lived below the poverty line, 58% were unemployed and 42% were dependent on welfare grants. (Peter Dwyer: 2004 The contentious Politics of the Concerned Citizens Forum)

A Brief History of Indian indenture / reason for their presence in South Africa

Most of the people of Indian origin, who live in South Africa today, are descendants of indentured labourers. Some 152, 000 poor Indians were brought from India, by the British colonialists during the years 1860-1911, to work on the sugar plantations (Hughes, 2007: 157). The indentured labour system was a glorified form of slavery, which sought to maximize profits for the plantation owner, resulting in the slow destruction of the bodies and minds of many indentured workers, some of whom preferred suicide, over the 'slow death' which the coerced labour of indenture was (Young, 2017: 153). The indentured labourers toiled under slave like conditions, where beatings, torture, starvation, and sexual exploitation of women were regular occurrences (Desai & Vahed, 2007: 107-207). The level of exploitation and cruelty was so great that the only way some people could exercise personal agency was through suicide, the rate of which was several times higher than in other poor exploited groups.

There was promise of freedom after a second 5-year term of indenture, and those who survived the brutal system, looked forward to having a small plot of land on which to build a home and to grow vegetables, while others (48%), chose to return to India, finding the conditions in South Africa too harsh. Furthermore, the exorbitant tax levied at all free Indians, including children over the age of thirteen was designed to force Indians to repatriate back to India or to re-indenture. Against this background, the following sentiment, expressed by the character, Thiru in Aziz Hassim's novel 'The revenge of Kali' may resonate with the descendants of indentured labourers.

> "I'm through apologizing for the sins that my ancestors were never guilty of. This new war cry: 'Go back where you came from' what does it mean? Back to the canfields? The Duchene? India? If I don't belong here, does the so-called Negro, the descendants of slaves, belong in America?" (2009: 168).

In this context, I have sought to engage with the following questions about life of South African Indians: Do people of Indian descent feel that they belong in South Africa? Do they experience a sense of full citizenship and belonging in South Africa, or do they feel like visitors who have overstayed their welcome? Do they, in other words, experience themselves as personae non gratae. To address this overarching question, I review social, economic and political contributions of South African Indians. I grapple with questions of their socio-economic advancement and analyze the extent to which it was at the expense of their fellow Black oppressed, and/or other reasons. I analyze these issues against the backdrop of poverty and inequality along racial lines, which continues 28 years after National Liberation, and locate these problems firmly in our neoliberal democracy, which is failing the masses of poor, thereby exacerbating the existing racial tensions in the country. At the heart of the thesis, I present portraits of ordinary South African Indians, to understand their lived history, and how they navigated life under apartheid South Africa, and continue to live in post-apartheid times.

Relevance and method of the research

The study is relevant as there are signs that the extreme inequality is no longer tolerable by the large masses of the poor, whose expectations of a better life under the government of our liberation party, has been dashed by greed, corruption and lack of accountability of the elite leadership. Angry, hungry people are easily mobilized for nefarious activity, by demagogues who fan the flames of antagonism against minorities, foreign Black workers, or any group that is 'othered', putting them directly in harm's way. The country is consumed by anger of unprecedented proportions presently, where masses of impoverished Black people feel that they have been left out of the social contract. They are subjected to desperate living conditions, many without access to basic amenities like water, sanitation, electricity and proper homes. In 2022 the people are directing their anger towards foreign Black workers and illegal Black miners, who are being literally smoked out like insects.[3] This raises a range of concerns amongst minority and immigrant groups, who agree with Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni's point that there is a tendency for post settler societies to develop into nativism from nationalism (2009: 61).

In order to answer the questions on whether South African Indians experience a sense of belonging in South Africa and feel that they have a legitimate claim to citizenship, I chose to create detailed portraits of group of South African Indians, over 65 years of age, who have experience of life under apartheid, memories of parents and grandparents lives under colonialism, and who have experienced the upheavals of life in post-apartheid South Africa. I designed a few questions about their relationship to past and present but allowed participants to lead the conversations in directions that suited them. Participants were given the opportunity to speak on issues that they considered relevant (Field, 2012). After some catching up and off script small talk, the participants were sufficiently comfortable to tell several stories, which were prompted by their memories. Amongst my interviewees, were family members, particularly my sisters. In our conversations we spent much time on childhood stories, and on the ordinary everyday struggles and simple joys of the time. Our parents became central figures in these stories, deserving individual portraits, as they help to contextualize my sisters' stories. Our parents' history and subsequent portraits are a result of the contributions of my

[3] In an op ed, Judith February points out that

"Given its abject failure, this government has identified foreigners as the convenient scape goats- be they Zama Zama's or Zimbabweans seeking to renew permits. The position seems to be that we need to smoke foreigners out of their holes and send "them" back to where "they" came from. It is horribly reminiscent of former president Donald Trump's comment on Mexicans: "They're bringing drugs. They're rapists." … South Africa is no different and it's not only the ANC peddling its xenophobic rhetoric in the fertile soil of impoverished communities." (February, 2022)

sisters and myself. Because I have chosen to interview family and friends, I am familiar with their backgrounds and histories, have been part of those histories, and I am therefore present in the research, as is my late husband Hemraj Sadhai (Hemy). I was mindful to honour the lives of this close and intimate group of people, who mean much to me.

A brief outline of the methodology

After much reflection, I chose portraiture as a method of inquiry and documentation, to present the lived experiences of the people I interviewed. Portraiture is a methodology in the social sciences, that combines empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, to capture the richness, complexity, and multi-dimensionality of life. It aims to convey the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experience, ensuring always that they are located firmly within the social, cultural and political context of the time (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997: 3). The portraits were shaped from the stories told by the participants, who have had an opportunity to review their portraits, and who have consented to their names being used.

Portraiture as a method involves the careful selection and rearranging of narrative data, to create a story that flows fluently and easily, and this represents an analysis component of portraiture. According to Rodriguez- Dorans & Jacobs narrative portraiture may be considered an analytic tool as well (2020: 611). The other part of the analysis must come from the audience, whose voice, according to Bloom & Erlandson, joins with the portraitist and her subject, to become the third voice, which further enriches the meaning produced by the blend of the other two voices (2003: 885). The idea is to capture the attention of the readers, who will engage with the stories in a meaningful way. They will either identify, understand, or ask more questions but will come to some understanding of how a section of South African Indians, navigated life under apartheid. The participants in my research spring from the various categories among South African Indians, i.e. the inner-city working class, suburban middle class, poor farming class, rich farmers, business class, professional class, and the politically progressive group. Though this qualitative research, lays no claim to generalizability, readers will get a glimpse into the lived experience of some South African Indians, and may come to understand that not all South African Indians are opportunistic, exploitative or tender seeking individuals. Opportunistic individuals are to be found in all races and are not the preserve of South African Indians. Aziz Hassim, author of 'The Lotus people,' a work of fiction on South African Indian urban life, identifies categories of Indians with a blunt honesty that may resonate with many when he says,

> "There are Three types of Indians: there are those that openly defy the system, (apartheid) to the point of losing everything they possess. They deserve our admiration.

> There is a second group that is so completely intimidated into servitude that all they have left to fall back on is their dignity. Old man Soobiah in the Postal Department is a good example. He stoically accepts the reality of his existence and, denying himself even the simplest of pleasures, commits himself to providing the best education possible for his children. He forfeits his own future comforts to the realization of an all-consuming dream—that his offspring will hopefully escape the miserable existence to which he himself has been relegated. He deserves our sympathy. Then there is the third kind, the despicable wretch, who energetically reduces himself to the level where he resembles a clone that not only imitates his oppressors but actually outclasses them in his effort to emulate their behaviour. His every action, even his private thoughts, are solely devoted to obtaining his masters approval. It is by his behaviour that the rest of us are judged" (2002: 364).

In the next chapter, I detail the conditions in which people of Indian descent arrived in South Africa, and the communities they formed under colonial rule and apartheid. This chapter thus contextualized South African Indian contribution to the economic, social and political life of the region, as well as their sense of alienation in the new South Africa. At the same time, the chapter serves to cover the existing literature on history and sociology of South African Indians. In chapter 3, I describe the methodology, while the portraits of individuals, drawn up from their oral histories form chapter 4. Finally, chapter 5 focuses on discussion and some conventional analysis, and attends to concluding statements of this thesis, drawing broad lessons based on the literature and lived experiences described in the portraits.

Chapter 2: Reviewing the History and Sociology of South African Indians in Natal

Introduction

This historically oriented literature review of South African Indians in Natal covers a period from 1860 to the present, and for most part is arranged in chronological order. It gives an account of why Indians arrived in South Africa, and how the presence of Indians complicated the racial and social dynamics in Natal, as well as their social, political and economic contributions to the region. It also focuses on what has been written about Indians in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and how they navigated life under apartheid. Of particular significance, will be the works that explore the present issues of belonging, uncertainty and alienation in post-apartheid South Africa.

According to the contract of indenture, Indians had to work for a period of two five-year terms for a plantation owner, and when the compulsory term was over, they could elect to return to India or remain in South Africa as free workers, most chose the latter (Hughes, 2007: 158). With freedom from indenture, came the emergence of market gardeners, hawkers and tradesmen whose economic success created antagonisms both, with the white colonialist who viewed them as competitors, and sections of local Black population, who saw Indian success in zero sum terms, i.e., that Indian success is at their expense (Hughes, 2007: 161). In order to articulate the needs of Indians who felt discriminated against, the Natal Indian congress and the Transvaal Indian Congress were formed. According to Essop Pahad, "from about 1914 to the late 1930's the Indian political movements in South Africa were dominated by the richer and bigger merchants pursuing a strategy of accommodation with the white socio-economic order" (1988: 87). But after the 1930's there was an understanding that Indians both merchant class and labourers/working class share a common fate with their fellow African oppressed, and their own liberation is tied to the liberation of the African people (1988: 89).

Progressive leadership among the oppressed race groups, worked together on the Defiance Campaign and the drawing up of the Freedom Charter in the 1950s (Pahad, 1988). The races came together in Black consciousness movement in the 1970s and later in the United democratic front (UDF) in the 1980s. Then in 1994 South African liberation was achieved, and the transition was peacefully negotiated through compromise. The idea that South Africa was a rainbow nation, comprising all races was advanced. The rainbow nation is now fragmenting, and racial antagonism and hostility is increasing as masses of Black people are being plunged into poverty and desperation. This was clearly demonstrated by the recent riots of July 2021 also discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

Early history: 1860-1930

Between 1860 and 1911 some 152,184 Indians were brought to Natal to work on the sugar plantations because of the fluctuating availability of African labour (Du Bois, 2011: 9). No consideration was given to how the existing local Black population would react to the Indians, nor did the colonial government and the plantation owners apply their minds to how Indians would adapt in the new country. Bringing in a new racial group added to the social, economic and humanitarian complexity within the country (Du Bois, 2011: 28). Desai and Vahed (2007), give a perspective of life under indenture, as a life of slavery. They paint a picture of the hardships faced by Indians, who worked from dawn to dusk for very little wages and insufficient food rations, lived in poorly constructed accommodation, with no access to proper sanitation and were subjected to harsh treatment by plantation management. They were often beaten with sjamboks and forced to work even when sick leading some workers to hang themselves rather than tolerate the extreme abuse (2007: 71). Women faced the added problem of sexual assaults by white planters, who wielded their power in the most brutal ways (2007: 207).

As per the contract, after the second five-year term was over, Indians could choose to return to India or to remain in South Africa as free workers. The free Indians faced many challenges, their freedom of movement was curtailed, and they were restricted to certain living areas. But the most crippling of all obstacles was the annual 3 Pound poll tax payable by all free Indians, including children older than 13 who chose not to re-indenture. This tax was almost impossible for people to pay (given that their income was a meagre 14 shillings per month). The 3 Pound poll tax was intended to end independent economic activity of Indians, and/or to force them into choosing repatriation to India. According to Uma Dhupelia Mesthrie, the 3 pound tax had the desired effect and by 1913, two thirds of the indentured workforce were on second or third contracts and between 1902 and 1913, some 32,506 Indians took their free return passages to India. For the remaining free Indians, life was a hard struggle, working to meet an exorbitant tax (2000: 16).

Freund (1995) gives a similar perspective as Dhupelia Mesthrie (2000) and Desai &Vahed (2007). Freund highlights the conditions of hardship that the Indian worker was subjected to, their progress as market gardeners and hawkers, their movement into trade and industry, and the concomitant irritation and antagonism this created in the white settler community, and local Black population. Freund attributes the success of Indian farmers to the hard work to which extended families submitted themselves (Freund, 1995: 16). Hughes (2007) too, argues that the success of free Indians could be found in their capacity for hard work. The work ethic of this labouring class of free Indians brought financial success. At the same time, it is important to recall that access to land was racialized. Conditions were hence created for the adversarial relations between the deeply exploited Black Africans, and the relatively better off Indians. This was spread and intensified by leaders like AWG

Champion (President of ANC 1912) and John Dube, (owner of Ilanga lase Natal newspaper) both sons of missionary educated fathers who, she argues imbibed anti-Indian sentiment from the white missionaries who described Indians as wicked and "as a cloud on the social landscape" (2007: 16). John Dube made anti Indian pronouncements regularly in the Ilanga lase newspaper. In one article, he shared his views on Indians under the heading 'The Indian invasion' writing, "we know by sad experience how beneath our very eyes our childrens' bread is taken by these Asiatics: how whatever little earnings we derive from Europeans, go to swell the purses of these strangers, with whom we seem obliged to trade." (Ilanga lase Natal, 11 December 1903). He participated in the founding of the Zulu ethnic, nationalist organization, Inkatha (Hughes, 2007: 163).

Du Bois (2011) gives the reader an insight into White attitudes to the "Indian Question" by documenting the articles that appeared in the Natal Mercury, in the formative period of the history of Kwa Zulu Natal. These Natal Mercury articles, analysed by Du Bois, begin with the need for Indian indentured labour in the 1860's, to growing concern over Indian migration as a "swarming and swamping" process, to the fear of Indian competition (2011: 112). Indian presence was noted as a source of "irritation" and finally the articles call for their mass expulsion (2011: 149). It is apparent, that while Indian labour brought great wealth to the Natal, their presence as freed workers, was clearly not welcome.

Working class struggle

The period 1930-1940 marks the period of the emergence of an Indian working class, as many free Indians sought work in the emerging manufacturing industry in Natal. According to Pahad, these workers joined trade unions and developed a working-class consciousness. Their radical political thinking coalesced with progressive professionals such as Dr's Yusuf Dadoo and Monty Naicker, who steered Indians towards a common worker struggle with their Black counterparts (1988: 89). Up to this point (1914-1930), Indian political movement was dominated by the narrow interests of the rich merchant class. As the trade union movement began to take off, Indian and Black workers came together in common struggle against racist oppression (1988: 89).

The 1940's covers the passive resistance which challenged the permit system for interprovincial travel and the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946. While the permit system and the Asiatic Land Tenure Act were issues of interest mainly to Indians, the militancy and determination that the resistance displayed, according to Pahad, "laid the foundation for greater cooperation with the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party" (1988: 90).

While there were some ANC leaders who opposed working with Indians, there were others who embraced Indians as part of the oppressed. The 1950's saw Indian and African leadership work together in the Defiance Campaign and later, the Freedom Charter, that laid down core principles upholding equal rights for all national groups, that land belongs to all who live in it, and all shall be equal before the law.

The 1960s was a period of increased resistance and state repression. The anti-pass protest action in Sharpeville on 21 March 1960, which led in the killing or wounding of 250 protesters also resulted in the banning of the ANC and PAC, making open political activity impossible. The banning expedited a shift in strategy, towards the armed struggle, which attracted militants from all the oppressed communities (Pahad, 1988: 91). The political vacuum inside South Africa, caused by the banning, was filled in the 1970's by the Black consciousness movement under Steve Biko (Pahad, 1988).

Steve Biko, of Black Consciousness (BC), argued that all oppressed groups were part of the political Blackness because, whilst the racial groups were oppressed to varying degrees, they were nevertheless oppressed by the same system characterized by white racism. According to Biko, "The overall analysis, therefore, based on the Hegelian theory of dialectical materialism is as follows. That since the thesis is white racism, there can be only one valid antithesis i.e., a solid black unity to counterbalance the scale" (1978: 55).

Biko emphasized the psychological aspect of liberation, that political liberation will occur only after Black people take back control of their mind. According to Biko "The most important weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (2004: 74). He maintained that Black people were a powerful force, and could achieve their own liberation, if they banded together to reclaim their traditional values and culture, and by asserting their Blackness through their art, literature, music etc. (1978: 57). This idea of Black empowerment, pride and capacity, resonated with the masses and links directly to the Soweto student uprising in 1976, during which 169 students were killed by the apartheid police, sparking international outrage, placing the apartheid government on shaky ground. Many Indians were part of the BC movement-- among them were Strini Moodley, Saths Cooper, Sam Moodley and Asha Rambally (Desai & Vahed, 2021: 30).

The Durban strikes of 1973, which affected some 100 firms from various sectors, involving some 60,000 workers and lasting 3 months was of particular significance as it pointed to the agency of workers, who decided to fight for their demands irrespective of the consequences. The African striking workers were not allowed to unionize, let alone strike. This was also a moment of Indian African unity as Indian workers, particularly in the textile industry were highly active during these strikes, which became known as the Durban moment. The strikes speak both, to the desperate socio-

economic circumstance workers found themselves in, as well as the influence of the Black consciousness movement. These strikes paved the way for the legalization of trade union activity among Black workers, which later led to the formation of the Congress of Trade unions (Cosatu), thereby shaping the future political trajectory in our country (SAHO).

The 1980s was a period of increased political activity. In Natal, the NIC worked closely with African activists in the townships, in common purpose. Then in 1981, the regime tried to divide the unity of the oppressed groups, by trying to co-opt conservative Indians into institutional structures. It wanted to hold elections for the South African Indian Council (SAIC). The Indian congresses embarked on a successful boycott strategy and according to Pahad, it was at an anti-SAIC meeting in 1981, that the idea of forming the United Democratic Front (UDF) was proposed by Alan Boesak (1988: 93).

According to Uma Dhupelia Mesthrie, the UDF which was formed in August 1983, had a support base of 1,5 million people representing, 565 organizations that included student groups, youth congresses, civic associations, church societies and trade unions. (2000: 25). The UDF, which also included the NIC and TIC, succeeded in thwarting the elections to the tricameral parliament, resulting in 80% Indian voters staying away from the polls (2000:26). The UDF filled the gap that was created by the murder of BC's Steve Biko in 1977, and the earlier banning of the ANC and the PAC and kept the spirit of resistance alive, through mass mobilization and protest action throughout the 1980s. The 1980s was also a time of interrogation of the meaning of National liberation. In Van Diepen (1988) contributions by William Pomeroy, Harold Wolpe, Essop Pahad and Joe Slovo among others suggest that the National liberation is only the first stage of the struggle, and that resolving the national question is tied to the redistribution of wealth, access to health, education welfare etc.

Rainbow nation: 1994 onwards

According to Mahmood Mamdani (2021), the compromise at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) in 1994, meant that all people, black and white, oppressor and oppressed, native or settler were given a new identity, i.e. survivors of apartheid. As survivors, they all belonged in the new political community. The compromise meant that inclusion was chosen over exclusion. No compromise could have meant an exodus of white people, of capital and skills, or a bloodbath. This would have detracted from the national liberation struggle and being on the right side of history. South African leaders advanced the idea of a new nation, where all races coexist (2021: 180-189). While there was an acknowledgement for redress, Codesa was not preoccupied by issues of justice and punishment, but on building a nation (2021: 179). Political activists, especially young people on the left, attribute the problems of continued inequality and poverty, 28 years after national liberation, to the compromise at Codesa, which did not address the need for redistribution, while others in the

general public for example, attribute the problems to corruption and mismanagement of leadership, who abuse state power for personal enrichment. The reason that poverty and inequality has not been addressed in 28 years of democracy could be located in the compromise at Codesa, or in the failure of the ruling elite, or in both.

The racial minorities were given assurances of being included in South African Nationalism. However, according to Desai and Vahed, this all-inclusive nationalism of Mandela is giving way to an "estranging narrower brand of African nationalism" (2019: 319). In their book, *History of the Present* Desai and Vahed (2019), deal with, among other themes, the question of belonging and a sense of alienation, that South African Indians feel in the post-apartheid context. Numerous interviews of ordinary people reveal that, while Indians feel they belong in South Africa, by virtue of their being born here, as well as their social, economic and political contributions, they are made to feel a sense of alienation and exclusion, by some leaders. For example, there is a view by the leadership of the Mazibuye Forum (Black business owner's forum), that Indians benefitted from colonialism and apartheid, through the differential treatment of the oppressed races, and that they should therefore not be regarded as Africans, but as Indians in the diaspora (2019: 321).Through their actions and utterances, "The MAF the EFF are seeking to create an environment in which Indians are put on the defensive, where they can never really be of here, as excluded insiders that have to always carry the threat of expulsion" (2019: 324). An example of this, is the interaction between Julius Malema of the EFF, and Judge Shyam Gyanda, where Julius Malema uses the affirmative action policy to create a sense of alienation.

In the interview for the KwaZulu-Natal division of the High Court, Judge Shyam Gyanda, is asked by Julius Malema of the EFF, who was a commissioner at the Judicial Services Commission, whether he (Malema), would be advancing the agenda of transformation if he chose an African person. To which Gyanda answered that he is African, since he and his parents were born in South Africa. Malema then replied that they can debate some other time, whether he is African or not (2019: 261). This type of exchange serves to reinforce the idea of the South African Indian as eternal stranger, and is unsettling, especially in the light of "the fact that the majority of Indians arrived as indentured labourers, victims of the colonial enterprise in the Indian subcontinent, and they suffered racist discrimination..." (2019: 320). Furthermore, the fact that South African Indian activists in the NIC, ANC and the UDF, played an important role in the liberation struggle, seems to be easily forgotten. According to Desai and Vahed, the NIC provided support for freed Robben Islanders, built links with internal activists and those in exile, and underground, and kept the ideals of the banned ANC alive, during the oppressive apartheid era (2021:44). Indian activists played their role in the struggle over the years. Many people born in the 1970s and earlier, will remember the 1990s and Operation Vula, a secret project, aimed at bringing senior ANC leadership back to South Africa, so that these cadres, involved in special

operations, could be mobilized if talks with the South African government failed. For their involvement in Operation Vula, 40 people including Pravin Gordhan and Billy Nair were arrested on 12 July 1990 (2021: 200).

Years later, in 2018, the EFF, focused its attention on the very same Pravin Gordhan, who in his capacity of Public Enterprises Minister, appeared before the Zondo Commission of enquiry against state capture. Malema labelled him a 'dog of white monopoly capital' while addressing EFF supporters outside the venue of the hearings. He added that 'Pravin has gone into all the SOEs and removed all black excellence because he hates Africans; he doesn't like Africans' (2019: 323). These racial utterances by a leader of a political party, against a person with struggle credentials and one who played a role in exposing state capture, is alarming and deeply disappointing to South African Indians, who experience a sense insecurity and alienation.

The manner in which affirmative action policies are implemented at universities, and places of employment leave many South African Indian applicants, with a feeling of being unfairly discriminated against. While there is an understanding that affirmative action is necessary to correct past race-based injustices, there is a view that it should be used to affirm the truly disadvantaged. Implementing race-based affirmation, without considering class, has the effect of affording more advantages to the already privileged Black elite class, while neglecting the needs of the poor of all the oppressed races. This has the effect of reverting to, and entrenching apartheid race categories and in a way, defeats the transformation agenda (2019: 275), while leaving large swathes of previously oppressed with a sense of alienation, insecurity and loss.

Indeed, it is this sense of alienation, insecurity and loss in the post-apartheid South Africa, that is captured in Thomas Blom Hansen's book, *Melancholia of Freedom* in which he describes the multi-layered sense of loss experienced by South African Indians, in Chatsworth. Through the numerous interviews with Chatsworth residents, he paints a picture of working class South African Indians, who refer to themselves as 'charous' and whose complaint is that 'before we were not white enough, now we are not black enough' (2012: 29). Hansen identifies the government's liberal macro-economic policies, aimed at attracting global capital into the country, as contributing to the economic woes of the working class in Chatsworth, who experience job losses, as their factories close, due to the inability to compete with cheap imported goods. Accompanying this, is the labour and employment laws, aimed at affirming and empowering the Black majority, which results in marginalizing the Indian community. In addition, the removal of apartheid policies of separate schools and residential spaces, has resulted in many African children enrolling in previously Indian schools, and thousands of African families living in Chatsworth, either in informal settlements or in newly built homes in Chatsworth. The cumulative effect of these changes results according to Hansen, in "loss of economic

security, loss of township as 'our place', loss of a sense of 'community unity' which was the product of apartheid regime's racialized deployment of political repression; and finally, a more imperceptible version of what Hegel famously called the 'loss of the loss,' that is the disappearance of the blockage-unfreedom and apartheid" (2012: 298). Accompanying the new freedom, is a sense of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety as South African Indians, especially the poor working class, try to make sense of the changing times, they find themselves in. However, the Indian working class has not always been conservative, as Bill Freund (1995) points out.

In his book *Insiders and Outsiders* Bill Freund (1995), traces the history of the Indian working class, who under the leadership of highly trained communist party unionists, in the 1940s were described as the most militant workers in South Africa (1995:50), who, for various reasons became a largely conservative working class, in the subsequent decades. He points out, that in the years that followed the 1940s, Indian militancy led to employers choosing to employ Black workers instead. "To the extent that Indian workers were identified with the Communist Party's activities and more generally with challenges to bosses in the workplace, capitalist interests lay in threatening Indians with replacement and experimenting with the use of African industrial workers" (1995: 53). This created a climate of fear of competition from Black workers. In 1956/57 for example, a strike of Indian textile workers at the Consolidated Textile Mill, resulted in 300 Indian workers being fired, and replaced with Black workers (1995: 56). The harsh stance of bosses to unionized Indian workers, and the choice of replacement workers based on race, negated the possibility of a strong unified working class (1995: 59). As the years went by, union work held less importance to Indian worker, who according to Freund, showed less interest in becoming shop stewards (1995: 90).

In the 1980s, there was the opportunity to reignite a militancy among the working class, residing in racialized townships such as the Indian townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix, the Coloured townships and those African areas not incorporated into the KwaZulu homeland. The Durban housing action committee (DHAC) mobilized the communities around the issues of high rents, poor service delivery, threat of evictions and threat of electricity cut offs. The idea was to use these issues, to politicize and conscientize people so that they embrace the broader political vision. The relatively low turn-out (below 30%) of voters for the tricameral election, aimed at breaking the unity of the oppressed races in 1983, demonstrates the success of the strategy adopted by DHAC (1995: 88).
In 1988 again there was success in mobilizing people across race lines, against rent increases and service charges, however, according to Freund, these successes did not translate to a common political vision for South Africa because, "The political affiliations in different communities continue to reflect originally racially constituted constituencies, and different ideas of what sort of country South Africa is, as well as different material circumstances" (1995: 89). Then in our first free democratic elections, in 1994, only 25% of Indian vote in Natal went to the ANC. Freund attributes this to historic fears of

being undercut by African workers as well as memories of racial exclusion, of being cast as outsiders in the city. “Indian workers look out on South African society from a unique position, experiencing it both as outsiders and as insiders” (1995:91).

In her article, ‘*Speaking about building Rylands (1960s to 1980s): a Cape Flats history’* Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, through oral accounts of residents, shows how Indians who, through the Group Areas Act of 1950, were forced out various parts of the city, into a dry and arid bushland called Rylands, turned it into a place that was termed by a newspaper reporter, the ‘gem of the Cape Flats’(Herald, July 28, 1973) by the 1970s.The middle class invested in the area by building shops, mosques, and temples, and by facilitating the development of the arts and culture in the area, thereby creating a sense of Indianness in Rylands. Nonetheless, its proximity to the Coloured and Black townships, facilitated a competing vision of non-racialism (2014: 356). Rylands was shaped by its inhabitants into their ‘main’ and ‘centre’, as opposed to being an alienating site ‘far from the main,’ by becoming a comforting and nurturing environment that catered to the emotional, social, cultural needs of the community, as well as becoming the site of vibrant political activity during the 70s and 80s. “… with its resources and its facilities, Rylands afforded a useful space to the rest of the Cape Flats in the struggle against apartheid” (2014: 368). Through the formation of the Thornhill Residents Association (TRA) inspired by Dullah Omar, the rates issue was used to mobilize the community (2014: 367). The formation of the resident association and political groups, formed to fight injustices perpetrated by the apartheid government, speaks to the sense of citizenship of people of Rylands, who saw themselves as South Africans.

Similarly, the Indian community of Durban, who were forced out of the city and surrounding areas into Chatsworth, through the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950, faced many challenges such as the breaking up of supportive community networks, the high cost of rent, high cost of travel to places of work and learning, inability to access multiple jobs to supplement income, as was possible when they lived close to the city etc. The book, *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township’* edited by Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed (2013), gives one insight into how Chatsworth was transformed, from a township of rows and rows of monotonous poorly constructed, small houses, meant for nuclear families, to one that that reflected home, replete with curry leaf, banana and mango trees (2013: 50). New networks began to be forged, as people came together in common purpose, to solve problems in the area. Community cohesion is reflected in the protest action started by pensioners when the supermarket, Checkers, abandoned discounts for pensioners on pension day, which led to the creation of the Bangladesh market, that attracts informal trade in fruit, vegetables, spices, clothing, fish and poultry. Community cohesion was also evident in the protest action against the bus ban in the 1970s. The bus ban implemented by the municipality to force commuters to use the trains which were inconvenient to most commuters, was met with a train boycott by the Chatsworth

community, forcing the municipality to accede to the use of buses. The building of places of worship, helped in recreating a sense of community and belonging, and the development recreational spaces like night clubs such as the Pelican, Savera, Sol Namara etc. catered to the leisure needs for people, who danced to the music of bands like the Dukes Combo, the Raiders etc.

In the 1970s, university student activists, tried to resuscitate the union movement, which together with political organizations, was crushed in 1960. Their involvement facilitated the famous Durban strikes of 1973, and a spate of union activity during which 176 unions registered by 1976 (2021: 91). The government appointed commission (Wiehahn commission), set to examine labour problems in South Africa, led to African unions being allowed to organize legally, for the first time since the 1950s (2021: 91). Then in the 1980s, Chatsworth became the site of protest, as the community rallied around students who were engaged in the school boycott, where the demand was for one system of education and a democratic society. The community was also mobilized to resist the increase in rents and the high rates that were imposed by the city. Activists from the NIC, ANC and UDF made many political gains as many young people were developed into highly politicized activists, capable of organizing the community through street committees etc. The efforts of activists, resulted in the Indian community rejecting the tricameral parliamentary system, that included Indian and Coloured people, while excluding the Black population (almost 80% rejected the tricameral system).

The book, *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township* (Desai& Vahed, 2013), covers stories of cohesion, political mobilization, militancy, upward social mobility and growth through education, sports and music as well as stories of poverty, unemployment, crime and drugs in the area. We observe that, much like Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie's account of the making of Rylands, the making of Chatsworth, was in many ways similar, where people turned a harsh, cold, remote environment into a place of comfort and belonging. Chatsworth evolved into a place worth fighting for, where activists continue to demand service delivery. This speaks to the identity and belonging of South African Indians, captured well in the words of Girlie Amod of Westcliff, who, during a service delivery protest in the 1990s, defiantly shouted out to the racist elements in the eThekwini council, who had increased the rents of the poor, "We are not Indians, we are the poors" (2013: 56). Inherent in this statement, is an experiential understanding that the most important categories, are of class and not of race.

The scholars on South African Indians, have covered all aspects of life, ie. their history, their contributions, the forced removals and relocation, the positive and negative impacts of the Group areas Act of 1950, as well as their feelings of anxiety and alienation in post-apartheid South Africa, where affirmative action policies seek to favour the indigenous population while excluding other previously oppressed groups.

In the hope that it adds to the understanding of what has already been written, my thesis calls on the reader to decide the important question of citizenship and belonging. Through the portraits, drawn up from the lived histories, readers are invited into the experiential world of the participants, allowing them to engage with the stories, in a meaningful way, and to come to their own conclusions, on whether these participants, belong as bona fide South African citizens or not. The readers will decide if the participants' progress was made at the expense of their fellow Black oppressed and will arrive at their own understanding of the role of our government, in the lives of the poor.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of the study is to understand how South African Indians position themselves in South African society, their identity and sense of belonging/ alienation during the oppressive apartheid and post-apartheid eras, their many trials and tribulations as well as their social, political and economic contributions to the life and struggles in South Africa. While much literature exists on the history of oppressive colonialism and apartheid, and their impact on marginalized communities, it is my view that the people who were subjected to the various experiences, are well placed to contribute to the production of their own history. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary. The participants were informed of the purpose of this project, were given the opportunity to review their portraits, and consented to the use of their names.

I wanted to have conversations with South African Indians, who had experiences of living under apartheid, and who would be more likely to have knowledge of the lives of parents and grandparents, who would have lived under colonial rule, negotiating life under difficult terms. For this reason, I chose to include people who were over 65 years of age. Oral history based on memory is of special interest to me because, unlike history, which according to Nora, is the "reconstruction of something 'that is no longer' and is an intellectual exercise in how modern societies organize the past, memories are connected to life, borne by living societies, connected to real people, places and things, a bond, tying us to the present" (Nora, 1989: 8).

The participants I chose, are part of my close network of family and friends, with whom I share a bond of friendship, trust and love. I have known my sisters for over 65 years, and my friends and relatives for over 45 years, but the surprising thing is, there were many gaps in my knowledge about their histories which this research has helped to fill, and which adds to the immense respect I have for each of them. Each person's journey through life was different, but the core values of respect for others, concern for those in need, solidarity, hard work, sacrifice, importance of education, strict code of conduct, resilience, reciprocity, mutuality etc. is evident in all the stories. These values have played a role in the rapid mobility of these participants and their families, from poor working-class backgrounds to the middle class. While it is true that South African Indians were given privileges such as the right to buy land, or to live in the city close schools and jobs etc., but these alone may not have allowed for the rapid social mobility, as the oral history and portraits shaped from those histories reveal.

Through interviews via zoom and or video calls, I have engaged with participants in a way that allowed for relaxed conversation between myself and the participants, as they told stories based on memories of the past. From the data collected in this way, portraits of participants and significant

others were shaped using Sarah Lightfoot's (1986) portraiture methodology, which is aimed at creating a portrait using words. According to Sarah Travis, "… portraiture methodology takes the experience, feelings, and other embodied ways of knowing into account when attempting to describe phenomena, while also maintaining a critical view of the social, political and economic contexts within which they manifest" (2020: 104).

Portraiture

Portraiture builds on the information taken from oral accounts, by ordering the data in a way that allows the story to unfold coherently, within the social and political context of the time. The idea is to understand human experience holistically. The ordering of the events, the highlighting of the socio-political and cultural contexts etc. lie in the hands of the researcher, who is likened to the painter of a portrait, who exercises her choice in the blending of colours to highlight certain areas, and to create textures in the painting. The researcher chooses from reams of participants data, what to include in the portrait, and how to weave the story in a meaningful way, keeping in mind always to honour the lives of the participant, and to create a portrait that exudes the essence of the participants life. To this extent, my voice is interwoven with that of the participants. The whole idea is to produce research that is readable and relevant, so that people engage with it, identify with it, or disagree with it. This is the whole purpose of this thesis--- to put ideas/perspectives out there, and to start a wider discussion and debate.

Reasons portraiture was the preferred methodology

I have written up these portraits because I believe, as does Lawrence -Lightfoot, that "…embedded in it, the reader will discover resonant universal themes" (2005: 13). The history of Indian indenture, the reasons they were brought to South Africa, their population size, their religious beliefs and culture, the ambivalent reactions to their presence etc. are well documented, however there is much that is left out – the individual experiences of human beings navigating difficult, discriminatory and oppressive environments, and the impact of these experiences on the present. Portraiture is the design choice for this research as the emphasis is not at achieving objective reproducible data, but at unique, subjective interpretations of life during different historical periods—of personal experiences of forced removals, broken lives, livelihoods and communities, of building new lives and livelihoods, of pain and hardships endured, of agency and activism and of survival. By stimulating memories, the dialogue about the past can occur so that the emotional dimensions may be recorded and historicized (Field, 2012). Memories and the stories shaped by them, have the capacity to move people into wanting to learn more about the past and its relevance for the present and the future. During apartheid, large swathes of ordinary people with hopes, aspirations and dreams, suffered loss, discrimination, degradation and dislocation. They have memories and stories embedded in their souls, that have not

been articulated. Only those people that history deemed important, are commemorated through museums, street names and monuments. It is my hope that the portraiture, which is produced through dialogue about memory, addresses this epistemic injustice.

I am drawn to the idea of creating our own research using portraiture because everyone (in my opinion) enjoys a story, furthermore, it is an attempt to craft a decolonial interpretation that does not impose an argument, but one that needs to be gleaned from the portrait. The reader gets a holistic picture and draws from it what she will. The aim is not to produce accurate realities as Rodriguez-Doran & Jacobs mention

> "…but to present narrative portraiture as a methodological tool that aims to reflect, interpret and communicate the narrated experience… In telling people's stories and providing the context in which these happen, the method involves the audience and recognizes them to be able to understand the phenomena under investigation, ask questions, and draw their conclusions. In this way readers are more active in the construction of knowledge and become witnesses to the existence of people whose lives are largely hidden from mainstream society" (2020, para 9).

I am particularly pleased to have drawn up portraits of my contemporaries while they are still alive as I was able to share the draft of their individual portraits with them, and no issues relating to selection of material, or interpreting the individual contributions arose. These issues exist when portraits or biographies are written of people who have passed on. On the making of a political biography of Chota Motala, for example, the biographer Goolam Vahed pointed to the methodological challenges he faced, such as role of the author, selection of material, and the many questions raised by Motala's family and activists in interpreting Motala's life and political contribution etc. (2019: 176).

The portraits of my parents (who have passed on), have been drawn up from our memories, and there is a tendency to view them through rose tinted lenses, producing idealized, romanticized view of how things were. My sisters and I have memories of our parents that have no hint of any negativity. This is highly unlikely to be accurate. There must have been moments of frustration and discord, as is present in all relationships, but none of these are in our memory. This is proof of selective memory synonymous with nostalgia. Though frowned upon by the world of research because of its lack in verifiability, nostalgia's natural home is in the oral history methodologies, which are driven by meanings and individual interpretations of events. We draw on the values, norms and traditions that the parents of all the participants, who suffered under multiple oppressions, lived by. The traditions of taking time for each other, listening to each other's problems, spending time helping each other, seeing themselves in each other, etc. have become devalued in the fast- paced technologically advanced times in which we live. There is a need to draw attention to those life sustaining values, and

if nostalgia does that, then I believe that is valuable. Indeed, the strengths, capacities and resilience of our parents, on which we reflect through nostalgic lenses, helps the present generation to cope with current problems. We draw valuable lessons from these memories. From this perspective, nostalgia does not negatively affect the value of the portraits, instead they add value. As Barbara Shirciffe puts it, “nostalgia can enhance, rather than diminish, the use of oral history for understanding how we use historical consciousness to make sense of and comment on the present” (2001: para 2).

Chapter 4: Portraits

Portrait of Mrs B. Naidoo (Thamayanthee)

Mother of Ranji, Preba, Rani (myself) Premla and Sivan

Thamayanthee was born on the 6 February 1929. She was the third child of Mr. and Mrs. RN Naidoo of 151 Booth Road, Mayville Durban. At the time of her birth, her father was already a fairly well-off bus owner, who owned a house on a large plot in Cato Manor. Nevertheless, the prediction of the priest who "opened the book" to read her birth chart, was that she would bring great luck to her family, whose prosperity would increase, but that such fortune would remain only for as long as she lived with them. On her marriage and relocation to her husband's house, the family would suffer decline and ultimate ruination. Thamayanthee married our father, Krishnasamy (Kitty) Naidoo, and moved to Maritzburg in the latter part of 1948. Within a year of her leaving her parental home, the family was rendered homeless. They lost their home, buses, livelihood and became refugees in Durban following the 1949 Cato Manor riots. Uncanny coincidence, or are events predetermined???

Mrs. Thamayanthee Naidoo was of medium height, medium complexion, pleasantly plump, with big "South Indian" eyes and a friendly, engaging smile. Strands of her long wavy hair, always managed to escape her bun, that was haphazardly twisted at the back of her head, giving the impression of a person always hard at work, which of course she was. She could be seen hurrying about the house, with her 'mundhani' (loose end of saree), wrapped tightly around her waist and tucked in, doing ten thousand things simultaneously, and getting through them all, without a complaint. When she was not busy on the sewing machine, she was in the kitchen, either grinding spices on the "ami kal" (grinding stone) or cooking on our "Welcome Dover" coal stove.

The house was never tidy, despite her best effort. There were usually pieces of fabric, cotton threads or straight pins on the floor, and the dining room table was always covered by mounds of clothes, at different stages of completion. She took on more sewing than she was able to complete, by the agreed upon dates, and would not refuse any customer, as the money was greatly needed. (She charged 40c – 60c per dress depending on the style). She was always hurrying between the sewing machine and the stove, without a fuss or a complaint. She would usually start the cooking, return to her sewing, then shout out instructions to one of us, to either add the potatoes to the curry on the stove, or to stir the pot, or check that the food doesn't burn, etc.

She treated our father with great respect, there was always a ready meal for him when he arrived home, irrespective of whether he popped into the pub, on his way home. After his supper, she would

ask him not to waste money in the pub. He would protest that he did not go to the pub and make up some excuse for the delay. Then, when she would quietly put her hand into his coat pocket, and pull out two boiled eggs, all he could do was respond with a guilty, sheepish smile. [4]

There was much love between our parents, of a kind that was never demonstrated openly, but we could feel it. Our mother's first cup of tea in the morning, was always made by my father. He would sneak quietly into the kitchen at 5am to make tea. When asked by my grandmother what he was doing, he would say that he is just going to the kitchen for a glass of water. Our dad always tried to please our mum by getting her items that she needed, of the finest quality. When she needed a new sewing machine, she got it (albeit after a very long wait), and not any regular machine, it would be the state of the art "Bernina" Machine, capable of multiple functions. When the buzzing or hissing noise of the transistor radio affected the enjoyment of our favourite radio programmes, like 'squad cars' and 'consider your verdict' he got us a big Telelefunken radiogram with a turntable for LP records. (Thanks to the "6 months treated as cash" credit facility and my father's good credit history)

Thamayanthee's dream was to ensure that all five of her children got a good education, and "make something of their lives". She ensured that we went on all school excursions, irrespective of the extra costs. For this reason, her jewelry made regular visits to the Coughlin's Pawnbrokers, in West Street. She would often ask our father to pay some accounts and leave some for the following month. "They won't kill you if you miss a payment" she would say. But he would have none of it. His word was his bond. If he agreed to pay every month, then that is what he would do.

Thamayanthee was proud of her children, and ensured that they were well turned out, in beautiful home sewn school uniforms. I remember during my first year of school, the school nurses pronounced me a neatly attired child, who was "well nourished". I didn't fully know what it meant, but I reported this to my mother, and that put a self-satisfied smile on her face. Whenever any of her children went to her with feelings of self- doubt, she always dispelled those feelings by filling them with a sense of power, and that they were equal to any task before them. "You can do anything you want, if you put your mind to it" she would say. Another favourite proverb of hers was "Where there's a will, there's a way," and she kept that will alive in us all.

For a person who only had a few years of formal schooling (Standard 4), she was extremely articulate, confidant and capable. She took a commonsense approach to life and did not overthink stuff. She just did what had to be done to solve a problem. If the situation demanded that she play a self-deprecating

[4] The West End pub in Pine Street or the pub in Lancers Road provided patrons with 2 boiled eggs.

role, she did. For her, the end justifies the means. She once accompanied a struggling widow (with 5 children), who was desperate for accommodation, to the housing offices to apply for a Chatsworth house. She used our address to do so. When asked a bunch of questions about who this lady was, is she living at our address, why she did not make the application at the time our own application was made etc. she made up some story, playing an apologetic role with 'yes sir', 'no sir', 'sorry sir' and managed to get an application done for this aunty, who did get a Chatsworth house near us.

Outings such as going to the cinema, weddings and other functions, were not part of our mother's scene, though she did attend some important functions and all funerals. She spent any free time, listening to radio programmes, with her kids, all huddled around the transistor radio, while enjoying the weekly samoosa treat, bought from the samoosa aunty down the road. She was a great cook, and her reputation for her generosity and hospitality, preceded her. Visitors often commented that the wonderful smell of her food, remained on their hands for days, after enjoying a meal at our home. No visitor left our home, without either having a decent meal, or some refreshment of 'mindrel' (cold drink), and Baker's assorted biscuits.

She was a dutiful daughter-in-law to my grandmother, who sang her praises to all who would care to listen. Aya was very happy with the way Ma took on extended family responsibilities, taking care of both her own children, and the children of relatives, living with us for extended periods, from time to time. Aya referred to her as the Lutchmee (goddess of health, wealth and happiness) of the house. She was a loving and loyal wife and an amazing mother. We knew that, with her rooting for us, everything was going to be all right in the end, and to take a line from the movie 'The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel,' "If it's not all right, then it's not yet the end".

Portrait of Mr. M.K Naidoo (Kitty)

Father of Ranji, Preba, Rani, Premla and Sivan

Kitty was born on 2 October 1917, in Springfield Durban. He was only weeks old, when Umgeni River burst its banks, leading to the great flood that claimed hundreds of lives. His mother, who was only about 5ft 2," saved him by raising him above her head, as she waded through the flooded area towards safety. She told stories of how the bed on which they were sleeping, started floating, and that when she stepped out, the water reached her neck.

Our father's mother (Aya) was intelligent, literate in Tamil, and self-respecting. According to stories that floated around, when her husband, (a cook in a Durban hotel), who has been described as tall and handsome, showed the first signs of infidelity, she left him and returned to her brothers in

Pietermaritzburg. This is where our father grew up, with his uncles and cousins and older siblings. He grew up into a tall, well-mannered, intelligent young man who, according to his principal, would benefit from attending Sastri College, in Durban. Mr. Simon David, the school Principal, visited the family home and motivated for our father's further education at Sastri college, but the uncle, who could only afford to send one young man, decided to send his son instead. This caused much frustration and disappointment in our dad, who began seeking a way to leave the oppressive environment of the family home. When the army began recruiting among the Indians for World War 2 (1939-1945), our father signed up without informing the family, and this caused untold anguish to Aya.

On his return after the war period, Aya began searching for a wife for her son, who was no longer the compliant, well-behaved son. He listened to no one, kept late hours and enjoyed the pub scene. Our dad's cousin Savithree, who lived opposite my mum's aunt in Mayville, arranged for my dad to see my mum at a family wedding. My dad was coerced into accompanying his mother to the wedding in Mayville and was ignorant of the real reason they were going, or he might have refused to go. At the wedding he saw my mum, and agreed to visit her home in nearby Booth Road. Within a month, they were married (1948).

Daddy, Ma and Aya lived in their own little home at 532 Boom Street, Pietermaritzburg.
Daddy worked at Eddels shoe factory as a foreman, Aya continued to work as a hawker, pulling her fruit and vegetable laden cart along the streets of the white suburbs, while Ma raised her children, Ranji, Preba and myself. The family was just surviving in Maritzburg, so in 1957, our parents relocated to Durban, in search of a better life.

The family moved to 5 Agnes Road. Our mum and her two sisters, who were all dressmakers, received an order to sew bouffant slips (half-slips that had 3 rows of gathered netting stitched in, so that skirts worn over would get volume, 60's style), for white owned stores in Durban. This was the start of some financial flexibility for the family. Soon our mum began sewing dresses for the shops in Grey Street, and for the local community. Our dad continued to receive an army pension and topped this up with temporary employment when he could get it.

Kitty Naidoo, was a tall, immaculately dressed, polite and gentle soul whose only weakness was the pub. He was respectful of all people, spoke little, and did not encourage gossip of any sort.
Sometimes when we, the children complained to our mum about some mean child, he would call out to our mum "Thamin don't encourage the children, stop cribbing about others!" He encouraged us to work hard and do well at school, and that we should not compare ourselves with others, but with our last report card.

He was always in a space of contentment, living for the day. He had no aspirations to change our circumstances in any major way, and this was the difference between our parents. If we had shelter, some food and were together there was no need for anything else. The only area of aspiration was for his kids to get an education, and "make something of their lives." He was self-respecting and lived within his means. If there was a need to make a big purchase of some sort, he did, but only when he was certain that he could make the monthly payments. My mother would often ask him to skip a payment, to free up some money for an unexpected event, but this was not something he could do. He lived strictly by the rules.

When the Group Areas Act meant we had to leave our house in town, he dreaded going to the housing office to apply for a Chatsworth house, where applicants were treated with disrespect, asked a bunch of questions, then dismissed like schoolboys. When all our neighbours were allocated houses and we were not, my mum asked him to go to the housing office to enquire about our application. He said "Hey Thamin man, don't ask me to go there again. The last time I went there, the young white chap asked me a lot of questions about where I lived. I said we live in 5 Agnes Road, in town. Then he asked where did you live before that? I said the wife's family is from Cato Manor. Then he asked me where did YOU live? And I answered I lived in Pietermaritzburg, then he said, "Hey you are like a cat on a hot tin roof" A youngster, 18 years or so, speaking to me like that! I'm not going there again." Then our mum would explain to him that everybody goes through this indignity, that the white man is not family, so why should we care what he thinks of us, and how he treats us. We should just focus on the task at hand, and ensure we get a Chatsworth house. He reluctantly agreed, but if it were up to him, he may never have gone to that office again, preferring to rent someplace else, rather than facing the indignity at the hands of white officials.

Our dad was very strict. We were not allowed outside, to play with the neighbourhood children but expected to 'take our books and read". There were times when we had open books in front of us but were cursing him under our breaths. During our teenage years, we were not allowed to go on outings with our friends, so we did not ask him. We asked our mum, went out and came back home to find our mum sitting alone, after being scolded for sending us out. As for boyfriends, I think the very idea would have killed him, so boys were discussed in hushed tones with our mum, who said that if the older sisters conducted themselves with self-respect and dignity, they could have friends who were boys, as she trusted them, but that they should not make any boy a 'special' friend. That should come after college.

In Chatsworth, our neighbours often came to our dad to borrow a few rands. He always helped. When he didn't have money, he would borrow from Dickey, the local store owner with whom he had a good relationship and credit history (he always paid his tab on time), and he would help the neighbour in

need. When asked why he did this, he would say that nobody asks for help unless they are desperate, so we should do whatever it takes to help. When going to college from Chatsworth meant taking 2 buses and much travel time, my sister suggested getting a small car to which my dad replied, “I might be able to get a car, but may not afford the petrol”. Then he gave her a lecture about not comparing herself with her college friends whose fathers had cars.

Our father was at his happiest when we passed exams. I think we remained in school and worked a bit, just to see the joy on his face when he read the school report. As children, we found him to be strict. As adults he became our best friend. We could see the affection he had for us, in the many little things he did, that were special and individualized.

Portrait Mrs T Naidoo (Preba)

Retired principal (Durban school for the hearing Impaired)

Preba was born in 1951 and is the second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. MK Naidoo. Preba spent the first 6 years of her life in Maritzburg, where the family lived with our grandmother (Maritzburg Aya), in a small 3 bedroomed house, at 532 Boom Street. One of her strongest memories of this time, revolves around our grandmother. Like most children in grade one, Preba experienced a degree of separation anxiety, and person who gently coaxed her into regular school attendance, was our Aya. She was a hawker, who carried quantities of fruit and vegetables on her cart, which she would pull along the streets of white suburbs. “I remember Aya used to pack her vegetables and fruit neatly, making a little space for me to sit in. She would then pull the cart to St Anthony’s school in Church Street, then she would say to me, “good girl …go you class…. Aya waiting here for you”. Preba went to school happily, secure in the belief that Aya was waiting outside the school gates all day.

When Preba was 7, the family relocated to Durban, and she grew up in Agnes Road which was in the vicinity of the busy and notorious Warwick Avenue. Our family was a conservative working-class family, who were concerned mostly with just keeping body and soul together. Our father was on an army pension supplemented by temporary jobs, and our mum was a dressmaker, sewing for shops in the Grey Street area, as well as for the local community. The main concern for our parents was to raise us, keep us out of trouble and to give us a good education, so that we can “make something of our lives”.

As we grew up, we were not allowed to attract any attention to ourselves. We were not allowed to play on the streets like the other kids, or to sit in our front verandah, because there were people in our neighbourhood, that were “up to no good”. This didn’t stop us from peeping out from behind the

curtains, as the local boys played their daily soccer match, on the road in front of our house. There was one boy (TB), who would often look over his shoulder in the direction of our window. “Every time he did this we would burst into giggles from behind the curtain, the more we giggled, the more he did those quick, over the shoulder head turns….as soon as we saw daddy approaching, we would scatter and take a textbook in hand, pretending to be studying”.

There were occasions, when our giggling broke out at the most inopportune times. Preba recalls our Friday Bhajan service times. “At 6pm the lamps were lit, and we sat cross legged on the lounge floor for service. Daddy would listen to us from his room. The bhajans would go on nicely for about half an hour. Then when any song containing the word ‘Guru’ was sung, there would be a bout of giggling. Guru was the name of a fellow we knew, who was connected to an embarrassing incident. We couldn’t help ourselves, the giggling just happened. Then to stifle the giggles, we would hold our nose and mouth between praying hands and tried hard to keep straight faces. Ma would give us a look to caution us, because daddy was in the next room (he did not appreciate ‘disrespect’ while praying). Poor Ma would bravely put in her best effort to complete the song with a straight face until the giggling got to her, then she would erupt into stomach shaking laughter, and we would all fall over laughing. Daddy was not happy; he would tell us to end the service and ‘to take our books and read”.

We had a simple life filled with small joys and much affection. Preba has strong memories of Ma and her sewing machine, “I remember how we used to sit around ma, as she sewed our dresses for Diwali or Christmas. We used to be so excited and would all jump up and down shouting, ‘Sew my dress first! Sew my dress first!’. Then we’d give all kinds of reasons why our dress should be sewn first. Ma would sew till late in the night. I remember watching Ma’s fingers, as she fed the fabric to the needle and was amazed that she never ran her fingers under the needle foot. As she finished a dress, she would toss it to Ranji or me, to do the handwork. We sewed the hems by hand and stitched on the buttons. Those were such happy days.”

Preba describes the people in our neighbourhood in town as ‘special,’ and that borrowing, and lending money was a common practice. She recalls that the amount usually borrowed and lent by the mothers in our neighbourhood, was the princely sum of one rand, “One rand was lot of money in those days. You could buy the weeks vegetables for R1 on market day.” She has fond memories of accompanying our parents to the market on Saturday mornings. “Ma used to stop at each stall, ask the price of the potatoes or dhania or whatever, then she would shake her head, and move on to the next stall holder and ask the price of the potatoes etc., and the same thing would happen. Daddy would get so frustrated with her, he’d say ‘Thamin, the man is giving you 3 bunches of dhania for 5cents and 3 pounds of potatoes for 10cents, still you are not happy? If he makes it any cheaper, he’d be giving it away for free, don’t be so unreasonable.’ Then he would say that he wasn’t going to walk around the

market with her anymore, preferring to wait outside Kit Kat café till she was done. That's how it was, Ma was very careful with how she spent the money... every cent counted."

Preba attributes much of her positive university experience to Ma. "Ma sewed the best clothes for Ranji and me. Ranji was in Springfield Training College, and I was in Salisbury Island, and we used to share our clothes, so we always had something nice and fashionable for college. I still remember the beautiful 'Twiggy' dress she made for me out of a tiny piece of curtain fabric and the 'Mykonos' suit (slack suit) she made for Ranji, which I loved borrowing. Ma was really the best."

For a short while sometime in 1969/1970 at the invitation of my student teacher Sam Moodley, Ranji, Preba and I, joined the Black drama group, TECON. We were young and did not have any strong views on the politics of the day, but by joining the group, we started to open our eyes. Bob Dylan's songs such as 'Blowing in the wind' and 'Times they are a changing" and Joan Baez's 'Donna Donna' and "Show me the prison, show me the jail" started to take on a new meaning, as we could relate the lyrics to the South African context. Association with the group ended abruptly when our dad realized that the "speech and drama" rehearsals we were going to, was run by people with a strong anti-apartheid agenda. That was the time when even an utterance against the government would lead to banning and imprisonment and worse. "You will be thrown in prison!" our father warned. He indicated that if we lived under his roof, then we would have to concentrate on our studies, and were to leave politics to the leaders. "When you have a qualification, you are free to do as you please" he added.

Preba didn't have any personal ambition for reaching heights in her career, they just kind of happened. Being at the right place, at the right time, may be the reason for how things panned out. At the age of 7, after the family relocated to Durban, she was refused admission at the Mirabhai School in Somsteu. "In a strange twist of fate, some 17 years later, I walked into that very same school as a teacher of the hearing impaired". Mirabhai School became the school for the deaf, established by the stalwarts of the Natal Blind and Deaf Society in 1969. The efforts of the founding fathers of the school, were built on by her predecessor Mrs. B.M Pillay and taken to new heights by Preba.

As a teacher, fresh out of university, she thought that she was fully equipped to teach. "Brimming with enthusiasm and new ideas I entered the world of teaching, only to learn that what I wanted to teach, was out of sync with what the pupils wanted to learn". She quickly adjusted her teaching priorities by "looking into the heart of the child, understanding the needs and providing for those needs." A philosophy that guided her career, was "to provide for the deaf child every opportunity that I wanted to provide for my own children". Preba's spirituality, which springs from the teachings of

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is reflected in her work. Her dedication to her calling began to be noticed, and within a short span of 10 years, she was promoted in quick succession, to head of department and then to principal in 1984.

Under her guidance, many innovations were introduced, and the school has achieved some amazing successes such as:

--the introduction of the early intervention and diagnostic programme, bringing babies for speech therapy and audiological assessment
--Introduction of the academic programme leading to National Examinations.
--Widening the scope of education to include hair dressing, woodwork and driver education.
--Admitted The first Black Pupils in 1988 during Apartheid.
--Produced the first profoundly deaf matriculant in 1989
--the school has produced 100% matric pass rate in the years following the 1989 success
--Sporting codes included swimming, as the school boasts an Olympic size swimming pool and 2 gymnasiums.
--secured funds to build a state-of-the-art Hotel and catering centre.
--established a computer centre with a sponsorship from the Isipingo Rotary club.
--Opened the doors to 120 intellectually impaired learners and 9 educators from the Khanisizwe School, implementing inclusive education.
--among this group, 20 autistic learners were identified, and Preba motivated for the building of an autistic unit at the school for these special learners.

Preba retired in 2016, after 43 years of service to the hearing impaired. She is now enjoying some down time in the loving company of her husband, Ivan, 4 children and 6 grandchildren.

I feel fortunate to have Preba as my sister. It is through her, that I began teaching. In the 1980s I had only an Honours degree in Sociology and no job. I was a bit of a dreamer, directionless and a bit scattered. I needed a job. Preba suggested I apply for a temporary teaching post and simultaneously enroll for a teaching diploma through UNISA. I didn't have much confidence in myself and didn't think I would cut it as a teacher. Surely one needs proper training I said. To which she replied "If you take the time to listen to, and understand children, then you have the makings of a good teacher. But be sure to enroll for the teaching diploma" she added. Best advice I ever got. Sometimes I think, a person needs just one person to believe in them, and that makes all the difference.

Our older sisters, Ranji and Preba were largely responsible for improving the family's financial position, which allowed the younger siblings to have educational and travel opportunities. For a few

years, our eldest sister Ranji, handed over almost her entire teacher's salary to our mum for the family, and this made all the difference in our lives. Then, when Preba qualified she contributed half of her salary. This trend was followed by the rest of us, we looked out for each other.

Preba was the 'go to' person in our family. If any family member needed anything, from borrowing her lovely sarees for functions, to getting small loans, or lifts into town, or temporary accommodation, Preba and Ivan could be relied on. They were also the people, who took our mum to family functions and outings.

Our dad was particularly proud of Preba's achievements and commitment to the deaf community. He did not say it to her, but it showed in the way he'd save the best avocado, for her to enjoy on her visits (she would pop in daily after school to see him), or he'd say to my mum "Thamin do you have something nice for the child, she'll be here soon." He would keep her school magazines and articles in a folder in his bedside drawer, taking them out every now and then to read… a contented smile breaking on his lips.

Portrait Premla Naidoo

(Retired manager Old Mutual)

Premla is the 4th daughter of Mr. and Mrs. MK Naidoo. She was born in Durban in 1957. Although our parents were hoping to have a son, their disappointment quickly turned to joy, as this tiny bundle squirmed her way into the hearts of the family. Our paternal grandmother (Aya) pronounced her a lucky baby, as she was born with a veil.[5] Being born with a veil is a very rare occurrence, and according to the old people, such a child is destined for greatness. In any event, Aya always maintained that girls are a treasure to their parents, as they are always around for them. She used to say something in Tamil, that could be translated to, 'a son is a son until he gets a wife, but daughters are daughters for life'.

Premla was indeed gifted, as she was the only one who could wrap our parents around her little finger. She marched to her own drumbeat, questioned the norms of 'acceptable behavior' and rejected standards that were imposed on her, unafraid and unapologetic. Our strict, authoritarian father met his match in Premla. As a primary school pupil at Methodist Primary, she sometimes chose to play on the

[5] Being born with a veil refers to the appearance of some of the amniotic membrane partially covering the face.

swings, in the park adjoining the school, instead of joining the assembly. She saw no reason to join a boring assembly, when the swings were more fun. She casually breezed into class after the assembly.

The highlight of Premla's school day, was 'home time'. "I have lovely memories of looking forward to coming home from school. On my way home, I would pop in to the 'ice block lady' in Old Dutch Road. 1 cent for an ice block. I used to buy two, one milk and one red. The milk ones were delicious, but I liked the red because it gave me red lips. I especially looked forward to Fridays. Ma had everything planned. Ma would send me to buy samosas from the lady up the road. She sold samosas, idli and dosas, but we liked the samosas. I can still smell the hot samosas in its oily packet, as I clutched it close to my chest, sniffing the packet as I brought it home. Fridays were really the best. I remember looking forward to snuggling with Ma in bed, listening to our favourite radio programme "Squad Cars" - 'they prowl the empty street at nights waiting in fast cars' and "Consider Your Verdict"—then we would decide 'guilty' or 'not guilty'.

Saturday was market day. Our mum went to the market which was down the road from where we lived. While Ranji and Preba cleaned the house, (they were young women at this stage, and it was not appropriate for them to be standing outside cafés according to our mum), it was Premla's duty then, to meet Ma opposite the market, at Kit Kat Café, to help carry the fruit and veg laden baskets home. Premla has lovely memories of these times. "I would look forward to helping ma carry the baskets home. I remember waiting outside Kit Kat Café, taking in the sights and sounds. I would press my nose up against the window of Kit Kat Café, and could see the guys frying fish and chips, another would be shaking the baskets of fried chips, what smells! And the Café would be packed with customers. The whole area was bustling with activity. Further along the road were small grocery stores and tea rooms, playing loud African dance music. African women would gather around outside those shops and dance. I think I learned my cool dance moves from watching them. Then there were shop assistants, ushering these women into the store calling out, "Woza mamma, Woza." Everything was so alive and exciting."

As a high school pupil, Premla and our younger brother Sivan, often snuck out of the house to attend end of term matinee dances, at the local Majestic cinema, in Chatsworth. On one such occasion, our father who was returning home on the bus, saw her and Sivan among a group of youngsters, waiting outside dance venue. "Get home NOW!" He shouted, wagging his finger at her. Premla figured that they were in trouble already, and whether they go home now, or later they are in hot water, so they may as well enjoy themselves first. Premla and Sivan returned home when the dance was over, to the utter disbelief of our father.

Premla has fond memories of life in Chatsworth, where we knew the neighbours, not just to say hello, but to really get to know them as friends. “I remember aunty Rose who lived in the house in front of us. She was the first person to have ‘bioscope’ in her lounge, the first TV in our area. It was the most exciting thing for us kids. We invited ourselves into her lounge at 8 pm, on a Monday night, to watch “Rich Man Poor Man.” We just pitched up at her door every week, like it was the most normal thing to do, without being invited. That’s how it was in those days.”

On passing matric, our father accompanied her to University of Durban Westville, where she was enrolled for a course. Premla spent 3 months in absolute misery at UDW. It was a cold unfriendly environment, difficult to get to (2 buses to get there), and she was unhappy. Without our father’s knowledge, she quit. Then she confided in our mum, who agreed that nothing good can come out of a situation, that causes that much misery. Premla took on jobs such as filing clerk, and general admin clerk, then landed a job at the Old Mutual. There is a saying that if you do what you love, you’ll never work a day in your life. Well, Premla has never worked a day in her life, for a straight 37 years. She enjoyed her job, was punctual, almost never absent, got on well with coworkers, and treated clients with respect and compassion. She received may accolades, awards and promotions.

When our dad went to the Gardiner Street branch of the Old Mutual, to pay his monthly Insurance premium, his face would light up with pride and joy, when he saw Premla in the office environment. She would invite him into her cabin for a quick chat and a cup of tea. “No, don’t make me tea, you’ll get in trouble” he’d protest in a conspiratorial whisper, as he glanced around the office at White faces. (At that time Premla was one of only three Black people working at that branch). He would gulp down the tea and leave hastily, in order not to “get his child into trouble with white people”. Dad was very proud of Premla, and would often hold her up as an example, to those of us who were flitting from one thing to the next.

In my family, all insurance decisions were taken only after consulting with Premla, who would diligently check and advise on whether the product was the best suited to our needs. It is really mind boggling how this rebellious young girl, who questioned everything, tested our father’s rules, and patience, ended up being such a responsible and empowered woman. Through her many acts of love and care over the years, she has drawn many under the lucky veil she was born with. Aya was right! She was destined for great things, and what can be greater than the blessings she received from her live-in parents -in-law, and from her own parents whom she served cheerfully.

I feel blessed to have Premla as my sister, with whom I enjoy regular long conversations, usually ending in guffaws, as we reminisce on the old days. In 2018, Premla retired from the Old Mutual after 37 years of service and is now enjoying her time in the loving company of her family.

Portrait of Ivan Naidoo (Ayal)

Retired principal of the RP Moodley School for the Physically Impaired

Ivan Naidoo (Ayal) is the 5th child of the late Mr. And Mrs. S.S. Naidoo of Silverglen, Chatsworth, Durban. He was born in 1951, and is one of 8 children, who ran free and wild on their banana farm, until the late 1960s when their farm, known as the Umlaas farm, was expropriated to form part of the apartheid Indian township, called Chatsworth.

Ivan's parents, uncles and aunts, as well as their maternal grandfather, worked long hours on the farm, ate a simple diet (packed lunch of sour porridge and pickles), lived in simple wood and iron structure with cow dung floors, and had access to pit toilets. The family managed to make a living and enjoyed respect in the poor farming community. Their sense of worth, and dignity, came from their willingness to be active, enterprising participants in community structures, which resulted in the building of a wood and iron farm school, in the 1940s. Ivan and his siblings attended this primary school, and he has fond memories of running around barefoot, playing with his friends and siblings in the farm environment.

During school holidays, the children accompanied the adults into the fields, where they worked alongside the adults. On their return home in the late afternoon, the children would help with chores around the house, "When you are done with work on the fields, then you attend to other work, like feeding dogs and feeding chickens and other work around the home. You know, farm work never stops."

In the 1950s, the small farming community raised funds, and a more ambitious brick and tile school was built. This school, known as the Bayview school, still stands. And is now operating as the Sathya Sai school, whose primary goal is to inculcate human values, alongside instruction in the regular curriculum. The school was physically built by Ivan's father, Mr. SS Naidoo.

The quiet, simple and peaceful farm life of the family was rudely disrupted in the 1960s by the apartheid state, which chose to expropriate their farm, to make way for the development of the Indian township of Chatsworth. "Everything was thrown into uncertainty, the extended family that always lived together, the livelihood, the old farming community. These were traumatic times." Despite the compensation, expropriation usually spelt ruin as farmers were robbed of their normal livelihood. Ivan's family were at a difficult point in their lives.

Then Ivan's father turned an apartheid injustice into an opportunity. He had a farm truck, so he suggested to the contractor in charge of developing the township (Mr. Longtill), that he would use his truck to transport building material, to the different sites. "In those days, Truro school was the block yard. Bricks had to be moved from there to the building sites. My father started with 1 truck and ended with 17 trucks. This is how his livelihood changed from farmer to cartage contractor. My eldest brother Bobby, worked with my father, and he played a role in developing the business."

Ivan's mother proved to be no shrinking violet either, she offered to plant grass and trees in the developing township and transitioned from farm worker to an independent grassing contractor. Ivan's father who was doing well financially, built a big modern house in 1970, in Aviswood Road Silverglen, where he lived with his wife and 5 unmarried children. (The married children, and other members of the extended family, were given houses in Chatsworth.) With the money he earned from the cartage business, he bought properties for his children and physically built, a house for each one of them. He taught his children not only the building trade, but how to succeed through helping each other.

Ivan recounts "We did not use contractors; we did the building ourselves. All the brothers got together on weekends and built the house. We did the bricklaying and painting and stuff like that; we learnt on the job. We got trowels and worked with my father. We watched, we watched and learnt. He did the face brick on the outside, and we would go with the trowel, and work the inside. Brick and mortar are all that's needed. We were proficient, we could lay a thousand bricks a day. We built the structure, but specialized work like plumbing and stuff, was done by the specialists with those skills. I must tell you this, (for) every house my father built, my mother paid for the roof with her own money. Her thinking was 'I put a roof over my children's head'."

Ivan's father's generosity and spirit of service was not restricted to family only. "My father was always ready to share his knowledge and skills. We learnt from him to share as much as we can. In fact, most religious sites in Chatsworth were cleared and levelled by my father. He had payloaders which he used, to clear the temple or church site. If he was approached for help, he was always ready to help."

Ivan and his siblings have imbibed the values of their parents in whose footsteps they have followed, ever ready to offer help where needed. My family and I have felt the "Ivan effect" in our lives. With him in our corner, most things are possible. He is the 'go to' person for home renovations, for organizing large gatherings, for temporary accommodation of those in need, for taking my aging mother on outings. But the one thing that endears him to me and my children the most, is that he visited my husband Hemy, daily for 6 months, before he passed on from MDR TB. When for various

red tape reasons, we could not get a nurse to administer a daily injection to Hemy at home, Ivan came to the rescue. Hemy, who was a medical doctor, gave Ivan a ten-minute lesson, on how to administer an injection. After practicing on an orange, Ivan was brave enough to do what had to be done. He did this daily during the last few months. Ivan gave us courage, lifted our spirits, and walked alongside us during those trying times.

Although Ivan has retired from his position as Principal of a school for the physically impaired, he continues to be involved with this community. He serves in a voluntary capacity, as secretary general of the Association of the Physically Disabled (APD).

Portrait of Neeri Naicker (nee Sadhai)

(Retired teacher)

Neeri, born in 1954, springs from a large family of 11 children, and is the 9th child of the late Bala and Radhi Sadhai, of Tongaat. Endowed with much beauty and a cheerful, tomboyish disposition, she endeared herself to all, as she Karate chopped her way into the world of boys, often outdoing her brothers and cousins in childhood games and mischief. She was an ace tree climber, and aimer of green mangoes at unsuspecting passersby.

Neeri's father was a successful sugar cane farmer, who owned vast tracts of land under cultivation, in Isnembe and some part of the area, that has now been developed into the apartheid Indian township of Bufflesdale. The family lived in a large house, on the hill above Tongaat Main Road. From that vantage point, acres and acres of rolling hills, covered in billowing sugar cane, brought a sense of tranquility and quiet contentment to the family. (Just before Neeri's brother, Hemy passed on, his mind was fixed on the "rolling hills" and the house on the hill, to which he wished to return.) A section of the land behind their house, was turned into a private park, and on another section, houses were built, for Neeri's maternal aunts and uncles.

Neeri's father has a very interesting history. He started work life around 1930, as a "barrow boy," an apprentice to builders, who pushed a wheelbarrow laden with building material, on building sites. Within a short space of time, he learnt the building trade, and became a building contractor himself, sometime between 1940/1950. Apparently, he started building projects such as schools by laying down the foundation at his own cost, then the government would contribute to the building costs. In this way he built the Isnembe Primary School, Victoria Primary, Tongaat High School, Vishwaroop temple, the Tongaat clinic, and the Tongaat Market. He became wealthy and bought farmland in Isnembe for sugar cane cultivation, and a large tract of many hectares above Tongaat Main Rd, on

which he built houses for his family and extended family. The rest of the land was used for sugar cane cultivation.

Bala Sadhai was an active participant in local community structures and contributed to the general upliftment of the community. He is also credited with starting a co-op store in Tongaat.
Neeri recounts “He also started a Co-op shop, I don’t know what it’s about, but I was told that he helped people. He gave a lot of things to people who were getting married, like rice and things, in hessian sacks. He also shared the ropes on how to start a business, he empowered people.”
Neeri’s description ties in somewhat, with what a co-op is, a business that is owned by its members and that operates for the benefit of members. The member owners have a need for the product and services, have an equal say in the direction and operations of the business, which is run with a utilitarian motivation, not a financial gain motivation. All members have an equal say on the direction and operations of the business. Bala Sadhai enjoyed a reputation of being generous and caring. He donated land for community projects like the clinic, and accommodated in his home, many young people who wanted to attend school.

The peaceful and idyllic life of the family was turned to anguish and confusion when, in 1958, at the early age of 42, Bala Sadhai passed away, leaving behind a wife who was not literate, and children who were either in school or not yet of school going age. His wife, Radhi who was of a quiet, retiring disposition, soon put her thumb print on documents that were presented to her by male members of the extended family, and in this way the assets of the family dwindled.

For Neeri and the younger siblings, life continued as normal. They did not experience any changes apart from the absence of their father at suppertime. The older siblings, together with the mother, ensured that the younger ones were adequately provided for. Neeri recalls: “We had a big gang, a lot of cousins living all around. When we were kids, we used to play outside the whole day. We only came in for lunch. All the children used to walk into our house at any time, it was always open, and everyone ate together… mealie rice and tomato chutney or ‘juice’(gravy) curry. And every Friday, we went to the cinema. There were theatres in Tongaat, Ajanta and Vistarama and in Verulam there was the Luxmi theatre. We used to watch all kinds of movies. Indian movies like “Mother India” and other special movies, also the “dush-dush” action movies with fighting heroes. We also used to go to end of term discos in later years.”

Neeri recalls that the family ensured that her older brother, who was studying medicine in Dublin, received funds for his fees and upkeep. “Bhaiya made sure that money was set aside every month, to send to Jay.” Jay qualified as a doctor in the early 1970s and offered to see Neeri and her younger brothers through college. Hemy was the only one to take up that offer, for which he has always been

very grateful. Neeri also remembers that in conversation with a cousin, Jay learnt that she dropped out of school shortly before the matric examination, because her family did not have the matric exam fees. Jay promptly paid the fees, and the cousin wrote her matric, went on to do nursing and became a matron. “That’s how it was in those days, people stepped in to help each other.”

In the early 70s, the family home and land above Tongaat Main Rd, was expropriated by the Apartheid government, to make way for the development for the Indian Township of Bufflesdale. That was the last straw for the already distraught and bewildered mum, who within 3 weeks of being forced out of her home, suffered a debilitating stroke which led to her death 2 years later. Neeri, slotted into the role of nurse and took care of her mum during her illness.

Neeri married her sweetheart Perry Naicker, whom she met during her karate classes. Shortly after their marriage around 1977/78 the couple relocated to Johannesburg, because Perry, who worked at the Department of Indian Affairs, was transferred to the Johannesburg branch. The couple began their married life on a farm in Unaville, Johannesburg.

The Unaville farm became a haven for many people. Family and friends from Durban, who were seeking job opportunities in Johannesburg, often lived with Neeri and Perry for days, weeks, months and in our case, a year. Hemy, and I lived with Neeri during Hemy’s medical internship year, at the Coronation Hospital, in 1982. Neeri and Perry graciously welcomed us into their home, which became our home too.

Neeri and Perry lived a simple life, raised 3 sons to adulthood, in a modest 3-bedroom house on a farm. The plot though, was picturesque, dotted by gracious weeping willows, with sweeping views of uninterrupted skyline. Then in September 2017, their plot was targeted for organized land occupation. Neeri recounts: “Not only us, but the whole of Unaville, all the neighbours were affected. I remember it was 13 September, when we woke up, there were trucks all around, people were marking the land. There was a buzz of tractors, excavating. It was organized, it was planned, (it) started at 3 am.” Surprisingly, Neeri has no strong feelings about the land occupation. She feels neither robbed nor upset in any way. Her response to it is simply “What can I say, people need homes. They decided to move onto our property, we decided to move out. It’s OK. We are OK.”

Neeri’s calm acceptance of events could be attributed to her spirituality, (she is a member of the Divine Life Society) which is reflected other areas of her life. She served the shack community living nearby, by building a preschool on her premises, where the children were taught and fed. She recalls “At first, we ran a free pre-school at the Finetown Church Hall, it was in the heart of the informal settlement. There was no water, parents had to send 2l of water each. Once my car was stuck in the

informal settlement, old car… bad roads. The people from the settlement practically carried my car from the road to the church. Then we decided to build a school at home on the farm. Our neighbour, Siva, did the building. He volunteered his services. All the things like window frames were seconds, we bought them cheaply. We used to feed the children too. I remember parents bringing their children in wheelbarrows, and one lady used to carry her child in a basket on her head."

Neeri Naicker is a capable, courageous and caring individual. To observe Neeri's life is to see human values in action. She adopts a philosophical approach to the many obstacles and curved balls that life throws at her, with the words like "It's a karmic debt that has to be paid" without dwelling too much on the issue. One wonders though, does her stoicism spring from her spirituality, or has the school of hard knocks taught her that everything pales in significance, when compared to the loss of loved ones. Neeri lost her parents when she was young, and then as an adult, she lost all 10 of her siblings in quick succession. Every now and again, one observes, beneath the strong exterior, a vulnerable little girl, lost and lonely, who carries a deep sadness of being robbed of her family and who has no memory of her father. "I wish I knew what it's like to have a father. If I get reborn, I must have the experience of having a father." (He died when Neeri was 4 years old).

Portrait of Dr. Mala Naidu

(Public service medical doctor and political activist in the 1980's)

Mala Naidu, born in 1956, is the third child, and only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. GS Naidu, of Asherville Durban. She has two older brothers, Ravi, a schoolteacher, and Ruben, a public service medical doctor. Mala's parents were part of a very small group, of first-generation university graduates, who were descendants of indentured labourers.

Mala's father, Mr. GS Naidu, qualified as a lawyer in the late 1940s, was a firm supporter of Mahatma Gandhi, served in the Natal Indian Congress as treasurer (1960s), and was a contemporary of Dr Monty Naicker. Dr Monty Naicker also happened to be a friend and neighbour, making it easy for the security branch police to 'kill two birds with one stone'. "We lived diagonally opposite Monty Naicker, and the security branch guy would sit and monitor both of them."

It is hard to imagine what sacrifices must have gone into becoming a lawyer, at a time when just a handful of Indians received a university education. "My father was one of eight children. His father (my grandfather) worked three jobs. Apparently, he worked in a printing press, then my granny made some stuff which he would sell, then he worked somewhere else and would come home at 3am. He lived till 87. When my father finished high school, he began teaching. He was a teacher at Sastri

college for several years before going to university to study law, so he would have put himself through law school"

Mala's mother was a high school teacher. She taught at the Durban Indian Girls High School, and was a role model to many students, including my older sisters and myself, who admired this tall, elegant woman with perfect diction. To attain a professional qualification though, many hurdles had to be overcome. After completing primary school education, she had to stay home for years. "There was no high school in Dundee, so she used the time to teach Muslim girls, who were not allowed to go to school, in their homes. She only returned to school after her father built a high school, the first high school in Dundee. She went back to school at a ridiculous age of 20 or something like that." According to Mala, her mum could do anything. "She could knit, crochet, sew etc. She was super bright and even took an entrance exam to study medicine in Natal and passed." Mala also remembers how her mum dug in her heels and refused to leave the 'umpteenth' school that she took Mala to, in the hope of gaining admission into class 1. When she was informed that there was no place in class 1, her mother promptly added "My daughter can add, subtract, read, etc. put her in class 2. So, they put me in class 2, and that's how I finished school so young."

Mala led a charmed life in an environment of classical Carnatic music, poetry and intellectually stimulating conversations. She was loved and treated equally by her parents who placed no restrictions based on gender, on her. She was the apple of her father's eye. "He treated me the same as the boys, but the abiding thing I have, is the way he looked at me, like I was the most beautiful thing he ever set eyes on. For me that was very affirming. You know, like all my life, whenever he looked at me, it was absolute adoration. I never saw him scowling at me once in my life, ever. It's a real beautiful memory for me, that he was like that."

Mala has lovely memories of her father, fondly known as 'Little Gandhi' who was a kind, caring and gentle soul, who took the time for family and friends. "He was a lovely man and a dutiful son too, he visited his father every day, and had lunch with him. The family home was in Short street, so he went there every day, from his office, which was in Rajab's building in Queen Street." Mala remembers too, that they often had relatives or extended family living with them, and that her father sponsored young people who wished to study.

Among the neighbours who visited Mala's home, were Kannabiran, owner of the Graphic newspaper, his wife Thirapurasundari, who was a poet and member of the theosophical society, MP Naicker (who went into exile in 1964), editor of the ANC magazine 'Sechaba' and other NIC members.

Of the many people that visited, the person whose visit she most looked forward to, was Thirapurasundari, who shared the same interests as her father. According to Mala, Thirapurasundari was a treasure trove of stories and poetry, who kept the young Mala enthralled for hours.
The meetings of activists though, often left Mala with a sense of foreboding: "There were meetings that took place in our house. I was 9 and I can remember being filled with this kind of fear, that something was happening. And then, some of the families we knew, disappeared. They were Kotsie Naicker, MP Naicker who died in East Germany, whose son was the physician to Mandela. And the ones that remained, got jailed or banned." Mala's father was banned for 5 years from 1964, while his legal secretary, George Naicker was imprisoned in Robben Island for 14 years.

Mala's earliest contribution to the liberation struggle can be traced to her childhood days, when as a 9-year-old, she would collect funds for families of political prisoners. "My father was the treasurer of the NIC at the time, and he was involved with collecting money for political prisoners. It was my job to go to the houses to collect R2 each per month, for political prisoners. This money went to the family of Jack Govender, who was imprisoned at the time."

Her introduction into political life though, began much earlier "I have vague memories of fairs in Curries Fountain, held for fund raising. Also, my mother told me of meetings at Red Square. She took us to those, in prams." The impact of militant voices mobilizing for a just society, surely played a role in shaping the political consciousness of the young child, who as a young adult gravitated towards banned political literature.

Shortly after Matric, Mala and her brother Ruben were sent to Dublin to study medicine.[6] Mala and her friend Angela would often hang out together. Mala recalls "I was friends with Angela, and we used to go to bookshops to buy communist literature, and we went to anti -apartheid concerts. Then Satchie turned up on the scene" and Mala was recruited into cell group of 3 (Satchie Govender, Hemy Sadhai and Mala Naidu). [7] A year or so later, this group moved in together, sharing a flat in Ormond Rd, which became the place for political debates and discussions. "Work was set out, like we read 'What is to be done'(Lenin) and 'Time longer than Rope' (Roux), 'Wretched of the Earth' (Fanon) etc. and Hanif Bhamjee would come down from Wales, and sessions would happen. You didn't know who was in a cell group." (There were many cell groups) Debates were around topics such as the National Question and the 2-stage theory etc.

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[6] There were strict race quotas for medical study in South Africa and the chances of obtaining a place was slim, therefore Dublin was a preferred option for medical study.

[7] This was an ANC-associated cell group, which did not hold official ANC affiliation in its title, due to security reasons.

The students also became members of the South African Students Association that was already in existence. This organization played an important role in developing a political consciousness among the students in Ireland. “There were various committees. The editorial committee produced a magazine called the “Shield”. Those students involved in SASA activities, studied medicine part time.”

Sadly, when Mala was in her 3rd year of college, her father who was on a trip to visit his exiled friends in London, passed away. The loss of her beloved dad was painful but added to that was the difficulty they faced in bringing her dad’s body home. “Because he was a previously banned person, who was initially denied a passport, we faced problems getting his body home to South Africa. My mother eventually appealed to Viveka, the editor of the Fiat Lux (House of Delegates magazine), for help in this matter, and he helped. It was important to bring my father home, because he made my mother promise, that wherever he died in the world, that she must bring him back, and bury him in South Africa. So, she did that. She got him embalmed, and he wanted to be buried in the Brook Street cemetery near the Grey Street Mosque, and years later they put a highway through the cemetery. But he got saved, he’s sitting right next to the highway.”

A few years later, Mala qualified as a doctor, and after serving her Internship in Craigavon in Northern Ireland, Mala and Satchie returned to South Africa. They set up home in Umhlatuzana township in 1982, and began organizing the community there by joining the already existing, but conservative civic association. Over a period, the Umhlatuzana Civic association became a body that not only articulated the needs of that community, but began mobilizing around the wider issues, faced by oppressed communities in apartheid South Africa. Many young people were developed into dynamic activists during this time, and many political gains were made.

Portrait of Adv. Satchie Govender

(Advocate and activist)

Satchie Govender, initially found it incomprehensible that I was doing a piece of research on the history of ’Indian’ people in South Africa. When I indicated that I wanted to put a human face on the so called “Indian question,” his response was one of alarm, that I was even using the terminology of the oppressors.

Satchie pointed out that Indians have been born in South Africa, and are therefore South African, and that we should not allow ourselves to fall into the trap of colonial thinking, by separating the

oppressed people into racial groups. He went on to add that the most important categories are those based on class, and that most Indians have more in common with the Black working class. All of which of course, I agreed with. I went on to let him know that the racial differentiation I make, is only for the purpose of the study, which seeks to answer the question of whether South African Indians belong in South Africa – a sector of the population thinks not.

Satchie Govender was born in 1951 in Pietermaritzburg. He is one of six siblings, who grew up on a farm in Pietermaritzburg. His grandfather, a tenant farmer, grew fruit and vegetables on a large tract of land he rented from a rich landowner. Satchie's grandfather worked long hours, both on the farm and as a hawker. "He used to take the fruit and vegetables in his cart, he used to pull his cart, I remember, and sell it in the white areas, sometimes he used to take it to the market."

Satchie and his eldest brother received university education. Satchie's eldest brother was a master's student in India in the 60s and was a part of the anti- apartheid movement. He played a role in Satchie's politicization in the very early days. Satchie's first taste of protest action however, happened during his High School days, when students at Woodlands High in Pietermaritzburg, protested about going on a school outing, to the annual Rand Show. Days for attendance at the show, were allocated along racial lines. So, White pupils went on a certain day, Black pupils on another and Indians on another etc. Pupils at Woodlands, decided to boycott this show, and on the day of the planned outing, they drew a giant swastika symbol on the tarmac below the principal's office, cut the South African flag, and placed a homemade explosive device of fireworks, in the toilet, then made a quick retreat home by car. This explosion went off during assembly, to the absolute horror of the principal. Despite a visit to Satchie's home, the principal failed to get information on whether Satchie was involved, nor could he get information on other possible culprits.

After Matriculating in the early 70s, Satchie went to Dublin Ireland, where he studied law at Trinity College. He gravitated towards a college society, that espoused the causes of justice for the working poor, through revolutionary means, viz. The International Maoist political group. Satchie's involvement with them, included writing articles on South Africa, for their newsletters.
It was at one of the rallies organized by the International Maoists, that Satchie met an anti-apartheid activist who worked closely with Hanif Bhamjee, of the Wales anti-apartheid movement, and who asked Satchie to get involved in a political study group.

This group of six people, met at Satchie's flat every Saturday at 6am to discuss politics.
Whilst these discussions were going on, his Irish roommate, was tasked with "look out" duty. This tight, disciplined group had no overt links with the ANC and was totally separate for reasons of security. "And it was proved to be a correct strategy because Craig Williamson (security branch) had

infiltrated the organization. Our only link with the ANC, was through Hanif Bhamjee. He worked with Yusuf Dadoo and all these people."

This group of six, studied the South African situation with a strong sense of urgency and purpose. They read and discussed books by Le Roux, Fanon, Biko, Marx, Gramsci, Lenin as well as articles written by South African thinkers, such as Essop Pahad, Harold Wolpe, Kader Asmal, Joe Slovo etc. They discussed liberation and what it should look like, the pros and cons of the 2-stage theory etc. The group of six were also responsible for forming the South African Students Association (SASA), which was a well-organized body, comprising various committees, that were fully functional.

The editorial committee, ensured that a magazine, *The Shield,* was produced every other month. People were encouraged to contribute articles. The magazine was an effective organ of politicization as it contained progressive articles on a wide range of topics. The members of the editorial committee, often identified by their ink-stained clothes, developed skills like typing and roneo skills. "We used to turn them out by hand, but those were the good days. Those magazines were left behind (because) nobody dared to bring them, cause if you got caught with them, you'd be in serious trouble. Even photographs, you find (that) people never took photographs with the same people" (cell group).

The social committee ensured that several socials were organized, so that new South African students would come on board. In fact, it was at one such function, a dance held at the Kenilworth bowling club in 1975, that Hemy, who was new in Ireland, met Satchie. Satchie used the opportunity to find out Hemy's interests, then invited him to write for the SASA magazine and to join the editorial committee. That was the beginning of their personal and political relationship.

Then there was the education committee, that arranged functions like quizzes. Teams went against each other in a fierce battle of minds, on South African history. Team members met for days ahead of the quiz, to study South African history and politics, and to go over possible questions. The atmosphere was a combination of excitement and exam jitters. At the end of which, people congregated in a pub to celebrate the success of the function. The sports committee arranged soccer matches, the famous 5-a-sides and 7-a-sides, as well as tournaments.

On an informal level, members of SASA met every Saturday at 16, for a meal followed by a music session, in which revolutionary songs were sung. "A famous one was on James Connolly (The Irish working-class hero). Students sang other revolutionary songs and changed the lyrics to suit the South African context." Satchie would offer a 'translation' stanza by stanza of the song Guantanamera, while some talented people wrote songs that spoke of the desperate conditions in South Africa. When thirty voices sang "Pick up your sticks" composed by Hemy, about the Soweto student uprising, the

mood became palpable. Indian songs too, especially qawwali songs were sung. It was good fortune that there were musical instruments such as a harmonium, tablas, dholaks and guitars and excellent musicians in our midst.

The Saturday night get togethers were great. “It brought people together, which was good. I think bringing everybody together in 16, the social atmosphere, was the process of politicization also. The social environment was very, very important and that’s why 16 existed. It was an organizing factor on a social level. We knew why 16 was there, and we used the opportunity to recruit people and so forth.”

The six individuals who formed the main cell, then recruited others to form their own individual cell groups “And we then went out and recruited other people like Hemy and Mala, with whom I shared a flat, and other people recruited some others. So, we were an organization that was involved in recruiting people and training them politically. So that was our job, and other people like Vic, had somebody else. I think we did a good job, because a lot of people when they came home, they were very conscious, they still are, so I think we did a good job. Hanif Bhamjee was the link in Cardiff. He was a very bright political guy. He used to come down every now and again, address the group, discuss new issues.”

Mac Maharaj[8] had a meeting with the students in the early 70s and a few years later, Satchie and a group of students in Dublin, met people like and Dr Hoosen Haffejee [9]. “He was our link in India. India was doing the same thing with South African students. He came to Dublin, spent some time in a group meeting with us. He taught me how to wear a lungi and stuff like that. He was a great guy, from Maritzburg.” Years later Satchie conducted the investigation of his death (at the hands of the security branch in 1977), for the TRC. (Truth and reconciliation commission).

The training and politicization process in Dublin was rigorous, and students were instructed not to form serious romantic relationships with Irish people, as that would have prevented them from

[8] Mac Maharaj was a senior member of the ANC.

[9] Dr Hoosen Haffejee was a dentist and political activist, who was killed while in police custody in 1977. At the age of 12, he joined the Pietermaritzburg branch of the Natal Indian Youth Congress, led by Hanif Bhamjee and Dr KV Moodley. Years later he went to Mumbai to study, and joined a student activist group started by Dr. K V Moodley. He was a member of a cell led by Dr K V Moodley, and received theoretical training in underground work, including sabotage. He was abducted on 2 August 1977 while on his way to King George 5th hospital, and taken to Brighton Beach police station in Durban, where he was interrogated, tortured and strangled to death. (Rising Sun, September 9, 2021)

returning home. The Immorality Act in South Africa rendered mixed race relationships a crime. “And one of the directives was, you don’t marry locally, and the reason was not that we were against it, but people had to come back home. We trained you, now what are you going to do in Ireland? But we didn’t consider the human emotions of people, which is sad. People fall in love and stuff like that. At that stage we were so revolutionary, we thought we had to sacrifice that. In retrospect, we may have been a bit harsh, you know.”

Every aspect of student life in Dublin was rooted in politics, pub talk was all about politics, social gatherings at 16, involved political discussion etc. “Our whole lives were consumed by it. We needed to see how we were going to contribute, (simply) studying as lawyers and doctors and going back to South Africa, what’s going to happen? nothing’s going to change. The level of politicization was great in bringing about the conscientizing, so that people could contribute to the struggle.”

Soon after completing their studies, people returned home and threw themselves into organizational work. “We created a new cell in Durban. Health workers association, civic work and all these organizations were created out of that. It played a role in the sense that, you guys went and politicized people outside, we were in the civic, others went into some worker associations, one of which became a national organization, but the political discussions and strategy was worked out at these meetings.”

Satchie, and Mala worked in Umhlatuzana, where they mobilized many people, both young and old. “Without any political declaration of what we are, we worked in the community in such a way that we gained their confidence.” An income generating hall was built, a preschool established, and a women’s group was formed. “We made a positive impact on the community by doing these things, so when we gave them a political directive or programme, they didn’t look at you as political, but as part of the community, and they were absorbed (into activism) in a subtle way.”

Then there was the rates campaign in the 1980s.[10] Street committees were established and people, young and old came out in their numbers, going on marches etc. There were close encounters with the security police on a few occasions during mass meetings at Kharwastan Temple Hall, and during the time Satchie was involved in a youth movement in the 1980s, which attracted students from all over Durban, and surrounding areas including the African townships. These students met at Diakonia, and workshops were held at various locations, training leaders. This attracted the attention of the security

[10] Property in Indian areas were subjected to higher rates than those in White areas. This was an issue that caused great hardship to the community, and struggle against it was a way to mobilize people and increase their political understanding.

police and “one of the guys who worked with us disappeared.” Satchie was also one of a small group, that ran a free legal clinic, offering much needed legal advice to the poor community in Chatsworth and surrounding areas.

During the 1994 election period, a police directive, headed by Mac Maharaj was formed by the Transitional government, to ensure proper safety and security measures were put in place. As a member of the police directive, Satchie had to go to polling stations, meet with the police and army personnel. “And that was a trying time because the police were hostile, the army were hostile, you walk into these meetings, and you had to deal with all these people.” Satchie carried out these duties in the Chatsworth area, which was assigned to him, but had to make a calculated decision before entering a situation of absolute madness, marked by senseless murders and rampant violence. There were running battles between IFP members and ANC supporters in Ulundi. Killings happened daily, and despite Nelson Mandela’s plea to the people in KZN, to stop the war and to throw their guns and knives and pangas into the sea, the violence intensified in the run up to the elections. Satchie recalls “There was conflict between ANC and Inkatha in Ulundi. They phoned me and said that there’s a plane ready. I said to them, look at me, look at how I look, be realistic. If I go there, they’ll just slaughter me and carry on, those were difficult times.”

As a presiding officer at the Summerfield Primary school voting station in April 1994, Satchie inspired confidence in the small group of us working with him at the voting station. Satchie has an amazing way of drawing people into his fold, of empowering them, inspiring confidence and of allaying fears, especially during the turbulent times of the run up to elections and during the elections.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Concluding Reflections

While the methodology invites the reader to interpret the lived experiences presented in the portraits, it does not preclude the researcher from making her own analysis. What follows in this chapter, is my interpretation/analysis of the portraits. It is clear from reading the portraits, that the participants have had different lived experience, despite this, there are some commonalities that weave through all the portraits, which are highly likely to be responsible for the upward social mobility of this group of participants and their families. At the same time, we are aware that not all, South African Indians were upwardly mobile and that indeed large numbers remain working class as a participant pointed out.

Some common themes that arise out of the portraits

From the interviews, it is apparent that despite the obstacles and hardships that the racist, oppressive government subjected the oppressed racial groups to, people found ways of surviving. Their capacity for survival, is found in the joint family system and the supportive networks of family and friends, who form kinship bonds. Apart from the moral support, the kinship networks were relied on, for helping through exchange of goods and resources, as well as by accommodating children of kith and kin, who are not able to provide for their educational requirements. According to the sociologist and ANC veteran, Fatima Meer, the "kudumbom" or "kuduma" kinship networks of several nuclear families that were two or more generations deep, were invaluable in the survival of the community during those early times (1960: 64).

Kinship networks such as the 'kudumbom', a matrix of social and economic support, is a feature of poor people, in other parts of the world too. According to Carol Stack, who studied the strategies for survival in the poor Black community, in the American Midwest flats, in the 1970s, the networks of kin and the help provided through exchange of resources, goods and childcare is what keeps people alive. According to her kin-based networks literally keep people from going hungry, as food and shelter are shared. (1975).

The kinship networks of South African Indians also gave them a sense of self -worth, which was denied them in the white world. The psychological comfort of kinship networks cannot be over emphasized. Preba's (and my) father's reluctance to "confront the white gaze" at the housing office, where his "inferiority was determined by the other" (Fanon, 2008: 90), where grown men were treated with disrespect and subjected to humiliating remarks, acts as a foil that reveals the importance of the kinship networks, in making people feel whole again. Our dad preferred to stay as far away as possible, from the white world, any interaction with white officialdom, caused him stress. Fanon

captures our dad's feelings perfectly when he says, "As long as the Black man remains on his home territory … he will not have to experience his being for others… In the white world… the image of one's body is solely negating" (2008: 90). The callous domination of oppressed people by the apartheid state, forced ordinary people to respond in different ways. While our dad chose to avoid interaction with the oppressor group as far as possible, we observe a form of resistance in our mother's 'private and public transcripts' (Scott, 2007) regarding white officials at the housing office. On the one hand, she is dismissive of the white man, advising our dad not to be concerned about the white man's opinion, as he is not family, and on the other hand, she presents as a humble, respectful person to a white official, as she makes up a story when helping a friend apply for a house, using our address.

The apartheid group areas act bulldozed many established kinship networks in Durban, by forcibly moving people out of areas that were earmarked for White settlement and relocating them to far flung areas on the outskirts of the city, such as Chatsworth and Phoenix. These Indian townships, some 25 km away from the city, started off as dumping grounds for the poor, but by forging new relationships, people turned these townships into places of great comfort, and they bounced back demonstrating their resilience, as the new networks offered mutual aid and co-operation. Most of the participants have indicated that lending and borrowing money and goods was a frequent occurrence, and that their parents and/or grandparents, despite their own poverty, have sponsored children from afar, who wished to study in Durban. There was much give and take. People who receive help, generally reciprocate in like manner, and in this way, a caring, close-knit community manages to survive. As a participant in Stack's (1975) study commented "You ain't really giving nothing away because everything that goes round, comes round in my book." This notion is one that has firm roots in the Indian community and is referred to as 'karma' and is probably the rationale that guided the community-oriented actions of all the participants, their parents and grandparents.

From the participants stories, we notice that parents and siblings make sacrifices for each other, which they consider to be their duty. This duty is done happily and is not done with the intention to obligate the receiver. It is done because people see themselves in each other, and the joy of one, becomes the joy of the other. These recollections of the past, may be considered nostalgic, but this is not a problem for this research, which accommodates all subjective interpretations, and which is what oral history and portraiture is all about, putting the individual at the centre of the research. As Shircliffe points out, nostalgia allows people to "invest past experiences with meaning, and use historical memory, as a starting point for social commentary" (2001, para 5).We can draw much from the following recollections: The contribution of a sister's full salary to the natal family, (Preba's story), brothers putting in joint effort to build each other's houses, (Ivan's story), siblings paying college fees of younger siblings, (Neeri's story), parents sponsoring relative's and friend's school going children

(Mala's story), educating each other (Satchie's story) etc. which are all examples of how we see ourselves in each other. Sahlins describes this as, "a mutuality of being," persons who are members of one another, who participate intrinsically in each other's existence …who are co-present in each other, whose lives are joined and interdependent…(who) live each other's lives and die each other's deaths" (2011: 2).

This mutuality of being, is referred to as 'Ubuntu' in African culture, and translates to, I am because you are, it is about recognizing ourselves in each other, it is about our humanity. The spirit of Ubuntu is exemplified in Lauretta Ngcobo's (2014) book *And they didn't die,* in which she paints a poignant picture of the solidarity of rural women, who help each other navigate life, under the oppressive weights of apartheid and African patriarchy. Race, class, and gender coalesce to place women in circumstances equivalent to 'slow death' for the rural women, who are meant to work themselves to the bone, to provide for their families and extended families in arid rural areas, while their husbands seek employment as contract workers in the cities. The fact that they didn't die, speaks to the humanity of sisterhood networks/ ubuntu.

This mutuality of being is found in many other poor communities the world over, it is obvious in the Maori way of life, where kinship goes deeper than solidarity with each other, where each person is a part of each other. The word for 'I' is inseparable from the kinship group (Hapu`) past, and present. (Sahlins, 2011). So, kinship networks, mutuality of being etc. are the everyday weapons, that allow people who are burdened under the weight of multiple oppressions, to fight and live another day, in a space that they call home. All the participants made points about their parents and grandparent's capacity for hard work. They worked long hours, doing multiple jobs, in the hope of giving their children better opportunities. Preba's paternal grandmother, worked long hours as a hawker. Neeri's father, started off as a 'barrow boy' on building sites, and worked his way up to building contractor. Mala's paternal grandfather worked 3 jobs, to ensure his children had educational opportunities. Satchie's grandfather, did tenant farming as well as hawking, and Ivan's entire family, worked on the banana farm from morning to late afternoon. Freund make the point, that the success of Indian agriculturists, can be attributed to their intense hard work to which extended families subjected themselves—there were even stories of them working their gardens by moonlight (1995: 16).

While the survival and upward mobility of the participants was due largely to the kinship networks, community solidarity, mutuality of being, hard work, sacrifice, education etc. we also observe that the privileges afforded to Indians, by the apartheid government, played an enabling role in this upward mobility. Neeri's father made rapid progress in life from a 'barrow' boy, to a successful building contractor. While much has to do with hard work and acumen, it is not possible that he did it all on his own, there are enabling circumstances. In Bala Sadhai's case, an enabling factor was his being

allowed to buy a piece of land. Whereas, as noted above, Black African individuals were not allowed to own land. Unfortunately, the Sadhai family fortunes dwindled after the father passed away in 1958, and then disappeared completely, after the apartheid government expropriated their property.

Ivan's father was a poor banana farmer, whose farm too was expropriated. But because he had a tractor on his farm, he was able to offer to transport building materials to the building sites of the Chatsworth houses. Owning a farm truck, allowed him to act on the new opportunity that presented itself. So, while Mr. SS Naidoo was bright, intelligent, enterprising, and hardworking, these attributes alone, would not have led to his success. Owning land and a tractor were enabling material factors. Unlike The Sadhai family, the SS Naidoo family became highly successful businesspeople (Cartage contractors).

All the other participants and their families have also benefitted in some way, from the differential treatment of the racial groups. Being allowed to live conveniently in town, close to job opportunities and schools, may be viewed as a benefit. In addition to these benefits, people worked hard, ate simple diets (tomato chutney and mealie rice, or sour porridge and pickles) and prioritized education for their children. They demonstrated their solidarity, by making contribution towards building rudimentary schools, so that their children may be given a fighting chance at survival, and a way out of poverty. The building and maintaining of schools by the Indian community, spurred the government to reimburse half the building cost, and these became known as state aided schools. Some of the participants have told of their family's direct involvement in state aided schools. We are reminded here, of Neeri's father, Mala's grandfather, Preba's maternal grandfather, and Ivan's father.

Indian education expanded dramatically from the 1960's (Desai & Vahed, 2019: 237).

- 1960: 12.9% of Indians aged 5-19 were in school
- 1970: 24.5% of Indians aged 5-19 were in school
- 1980: 94.8% of Indians aged 5-19 were in school

Access to university, however, was almost nonexistent during the earlier times. Then in 1927, according to Desai& Vahed (2019), the Indian and South African government concluded the Cape Town agreement which made the promise for improved education. The South African government promised to uplift the conditions of some remaining Indians, on condition that the voluntary repatriation of Indians was actively encouraged by the Agent General Maharaj Singh, who was appointed to oversee the welfare of Indians in South Africa. The idea was to get rid of as many Indians as possible, by offering to uplift the lives of the remaining few. It was in this context that the issue of admitting Indian students to Natal came up. Natal university reluctantly agreed and in 1936,

some 19 Black students of which 11 were Indian, were enrolled (2019: 238). It is possible that Mala's father, Mr. G.S. Naidu, who qualified from Natal as an attorney, sometime in the 1940's, was part of this cohort.

The younger generations owe much to this pioneering group of students, who managed to get a foot in the door of white universities, forcing open spaces for others in later years. Then after Indians were accepted as citizens of South Africa in 1961, a separate university at Salisbury Island, was provided for them in 1962. The point to be made, is that tertiary education for Indians in the 1930s did not spring out of government concern for Indian well-being. It arose out of a negotiation, tertiary education for some, in exchange for repatriation of others back to India. Furthermore, the university at Salisbury Island was created only as part of the government's policy, of providing separate facilities for the different races.

Most Indians saw education as a way out of poverty. Preba's father's strict rules about getting an education, before engaging in any activity that may cause one to be expelled from school/ college, can be seen in this light. Whilst at the time, Preba and her siblings did not agree with their father, his thinking is understandable. He believed that the only way ordinary people could rise out poverty and oppression, was through an education. Indeed, the education of older siblings, led to good careers and improved material conditions of life for the whole family, better educational and travel opportunities for younger siblings, and greater opportunities for the next generation. Education has been responsible for propelling a section of the Indian working class into the middle class, which reproduces itself. Desai and Vahed make the point that "The Indian professional class that rose like the phoenix in the 1970's continues to reproduce itself by investing heavily in the education of their children (2019: 253).

Education played a role not only in raising individual families out of poverty, but for some it was to play a role in articulating for social justice for all oppressed. Mala's father, Mr. G S Naidu, who played an active role in the NIC, was a role model to his children, who continued the tradition of articulating for social justice, both at their places of work, through unions, and in the communities in which they lived, through civic organizations.

Satchie believed strongly, in education for liberation. His engagement with students in Dublin, at every opportunity, whether in pubs, social events or during home visits, sprang from a need to conscientize people, so that they may contribute in some way, to the liberation struggle on their return home. His involvement with youth and training leaders, reflects his commitment to the idea that revolutionary movement, cannot happen without revolutionary theory, and that the oppressed should not only be activists, but should be able to lead the struggle. These are resonant themes in Paulo

Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970), in which he stresses the importance of critical thinking among the oppressed, of engaging actively in dialogue about systems of oppression, why they exist, and how they are kept in place, and what can be done to change them. He emphasized the idea of education for liberation in order to ensure that

> "Revolutionary praxis must stand opposed to the praxis of the dominant elite for they are by nature antithetical. Revolutionary praxis cannot tolerate an absurd dichotomy in which the praxis of the people is merely that of following the leaders' decisions—a dichotomy reflecting the prescriptive methods of the dominant elites" (1970: 99).

While this group of participants, were positively impacted by the values discussed above and had access to education, this is not the case for many others. Indeed Satchie's point, that most South African Indians have more in common with the Black working class, is clearly borne out in *We are the Poors* Ashwin Desai (2002) in which he shows, that whilst some South African Indians achieved tertiary education and were able to move out of poverty, there are large numbers who have not, and who fall into the working class poor, living under constant threat ….threat of having lights cut off, threat of having their water cut off, and threat of eviction from the rented homes for unpaid rent. In his book, Desai gives an account of the lived experience of poor people (Black and Indian), living in the flats in Chatsworth. Their lives becoming increasingly desperate under our neoliberal democracy, whose macro-economic policies have resulted in job losses, as factories close, due to inability to cope with cheap imported products. The government's unsympathetic, hostile attitude to the poor, seems to show that little has changed, and that there seems to be little difference between the ANC government and the racist oppressive apartheid regime. Arguably, the freedoms that our neoliberal democracy espouses, amounts to freedom to exploit, entrap in debt, dispossess, and evict, the working-class poor.

We have witnessed how the structures of the state are employed in the interest of capital, against the poor and marginalized. We have witnessed police brutality when poor workers demand a living wage (Marikana massacre), or when poor students ask for free education (2 deaths during #feesmustfall protests), and when poor people, unable to contain their large families in small, poorly ventilated shacks, broke covid lock down rules in 2020 (11 killed and 230,000 imprisoned). We have witnessed disconnection of water and electricity to the poorest of the poor, who were unable to pay their utility bills. We have witnessed the evictions of people from rented accommodation in townships, and when these people build shacks on vacant land, we have witnessed the demolition of these shacks by the 'red ants' (a demolition company that the state uses). Added to the form of government that fails to deliver and demonstrates hostility to the poor, is the leadership. The ANC did not factor in the possibility of leadership, who access state power for personal enrichment and abuse.

From the above, we observe that the state can be an enabling factor in the relative success for some, and it can also act as an impediment, to hold people back despite their best efforts. Apartheid held Black people back despite their best efforts and now, our neoliberal democracy, which prioritizes individual property rights at the expense of collective rights of the poor, may be the biggest contributor to poverty reproduction in South Africa.

Contribution of this research

The contribution of this research lies in the individual stories captured through portraiture, which puts a human face on an important but heavy topic, turning it into readable research that may lend itself to a wider readership. Through the stories, feelings and emotion, are transmitted, giving the readers a sense of the social, cultural and political context of the time. The complexity and richness of lived experience may hold the interest of readers, and allow them to reflect on, identify with, and interrogate the work in a meaningful way, contributing to greater understanding between the races. More research on the lived experiences of South African Indians, may reveal that their success is in part, due to supportive kinship networks and emphasis on education, as opposed to, through exploitation of Black people. Though it lays no claim to generalizability, this research, nevertheless challenges the stereotype of the opportunistic Indian, and reveals a sense of belonging to South Africa, as most Indians have no memory of life elsewhere, their only emotional home being South Africa. There is no place else that they call home, and much like the Black American descendants of slaves, who do not have a clear idea of which part of Africa or which village their ancestors spring from, so too most Indian South Africans have no clear idea of which village, which caste, and which part of India their ancestors sprang from.

The research was motivated by a need to examine the position of South African Indians in South Africa i.e., are Indians citizens or are they personae non gratae? In other words, have they overstayed their welcome? Such a question implies that that they have a home to return to. In order to find out what position Indians hold in South Africa, I needed to get answers to the research questions viz., Do Indians feel that they belong in South Africa? If they do, what informs this sense of belonging? What were their economic, social and political contributions to South Africa? Did they advance at the expense of Black People? Why have the problems of the poor not been addressed in the past 28 years of ANC leadership? These questions have been addressed in the previous chapters, leading us to conclude that our country is filled with multiple contradictions arising from, but not exclusive to, colonialism and apartheid, but as per the freedom charter, this is our country, our home, and we (all races) need to find a way to live in it. One way is, to weave a moral and ethical life, despite the madness of corruption, exploitation and antagonism that prevails. While we may become exasperated at the slow pace of change, and the political goings on in our country, we ought to be reminded that we can make small differences in our everyday lives, through acts of compassion and care. We cannot

change history, it is a load we must bear, but we can shift the load, making it easier to carry, by seeing ourselves in each other, through UBUNTU.

Limitations of the research

This research, based on oral history and portraiture methodology, has a subjective component and does not lend itself to generalization. It is also limited because it extends only to the researcher's close network of family and friends, and sampling bias therefore exists. Further research on the topic could benefit by interviewing people from both inside, and outside of the researcher's social network, and by adding quantitative methods to the portraiture methodology. This would result in readable stories, backed up by objective data, making the findings generalizable.

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