



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Questions for Amma.

Tracing the manifestations of violence on the South African Indian Female body.

Kivithra Naicker

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the

Degree of Masters.

Department of Drama.

University of Cape Town.

South Africa.

Supervised by Amy Jephta

October 2017

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Plagiarism Declaration

I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own. I have used the Harvard convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in, this thesis from the work(s) of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced. This thesis is my own work. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

Signature _____

Date : 30 October 2017

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Abstract.....	6
Introduction.....	7-9
Methodology.....	10-12
Context.....	13-14
<i>Part One</i>	
Tracing Indian Theatre in Durban.....	15-16
Dancing the democratic landscape	16-19
Staging brown female identities.....	20-21
Coolie to Charou: A cycle of oppression?	21-27
<i>Part Two</i>	
On being a Hindu Feminist.....	27-29
Karuvil: Part One.....	29-31
Karuvil: Part Two.....	32-34
Intermittent Sacrality.....	35-36
Grappling with mother-culture practices.....	36-37
The mechanics of shame.....	37-39
Questions for Amma.....	39-40
Conclusion.....	40
List of Illustrations.....	41
References.....	42-44

Acknowledgements

My sincerest gratitude to the UCT Drama Department- Professor Fleishman, Professor Pather, my supervisor Amy Jephta and the staff of Drama and Hiddingh Campus: for the assistance, guidance and invaluable knowledge shared through the course of my studies. A special thank you to Shabnam Pansari and Tabassum Pansari for easily being the best- you both have played a huge role in helping me time and time again, thank you- it will never be forgotten.

This research was made possible through the funding of The National Research Foundation, The National Arts Council and UCT Drama.

My thanks to the staff of UCT's Hiddingh Hall library for their assistance and patience with my booking hoarding ways.

My gratitude and respect to the ICA postgraduate cohort, friends and colleagues for support and camaraderie. My particular thanks to Dean Hutton and Lesiba Mabitsele for your kindness.

To Nasiha Ismail whom I'm never without-I write for your daughter; for Joelene Jetnarayan who inspires me greatly; Tamika Sewnarain who is fearless and an utter warrior; Kate Jaskolski, my glittering mermaid; Namgung So Young and the ever fierce Kamini Govender, Devaksha Moodley, Marcelle Scott, Julia Wilson, Clare Craighead. For Ammeshaveni Govender, Anusha, Kamira and Tamika Pillay and Tereas Gillan. You're the pack of warriors in my life who keep me fighting.

To Tai, for everything. Always.

Lastly, I write for Amma and Tha Tha, for Ma and Tha Tha (Govansami Govender), for Thirunamalay and Gonalutchmie Naicker, and for Chandrika Naicker. I thank you for encouraging the pursuit of my passion, despite never really understanding this path I've chosen. Thank you for accepting that I often have to leave home to find home. For always being my reason to come back. I am, because you are.

“Females carry the marks, languages and nuances of their culture more than the male. Anything that is desired or despised is always placed on the female body.”(Wangechi Mutu, 2004).

“I am the woman who is not a good Hindu girl, a good Tamil girl...a good Indian girl. I am not any of the categories I thought I was, I am not any of the categories I was moulded into being” (Meena Kandasamy in When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife 2017: 247).

It is the insistence on never examining culture that leaves many women with nothing; that endangers the future of the girl-child. That insists when discussed, honouring culture should be placed above the health and financial welfare of a woman. It is this honor of inheriting silence, in insisting all women must follow one path and one path only. Remember, the most dangerous woman is any woman that cannot be silenced (Ijeoma Umebinyuo, 2017).

Abstract

“[i]n the eyes of the law, a woman is both Eve and Eva. As a pure, fragile female she must be specially protected; as a seductive object, from whom men must be protected. In both cases women are the victims” (Navi Pillay in Gqola, 2015: 36).

This research investigates performance as a medium through which the South African ¹Indian female body transgresses and transcends the limitations and barriers of identity, culture and society. As this study positions the ²brown female body as a site for violence and codification, it challenges the mythical and stereotypically gendered representations of brown females in media and culture. In examining the performance of gender through the performative case studies supporting this research, this study critically engages with the fluid and shifting territory of identity and culture, tracing a feminist tradition beyond western notions, challenging overlooked cultural and domestic injustices which perpetuate a culture of patriarchy. Rape culture thrives on manufacturing power and fear, with rape being “sexualised violence” that has “survived as long as it has because it works to keep patriarchy intact” (Gqola, 2015: 21). Through performance, this study documents the manifestations of violence on the brown female body, theoretically engaging with how subtle and surreptitious forms of violence work to reinforce patriarchy playing into rape culture, perpetuating a cycle of oppression. In examining the ‘tradition’ of *Indian* theatre in South Africa, this research examines the theatrical devices used to express anxieties, crisis of identity and representation, focusing on the South African Indian female experience through an auto-ethnographical study interrogating my identity and position as a South African Indian (Hindu-Tamil) female, artist, and feminist scholar. This study also unpacks the complexities and contradictions embedded within the representations of the brown female body in theatre, ‘Indian’ and Hindu culture through a feminist lens, arguing that gender stereotypes perpetuate a cycle of oppression; highlighting ways in which the brown female body is trained and disciplined into performing as an Indian woman.

¹ **Indian** is used throughout this thesis in reference to racial and cultural identity (in a South African context) as it was framed by the system of apartheid.

² **Brown** female body- In challenging this notion of ‘Indian’ being tied to outside of South Africa, I have chosen to interchangeably use the term ‘brown’ to describe the ‘Indian’ body.

Introduction

In threading together the themes and images that have surfaced throughout this research, the central and dominant image of a brown female body struggling to break patterns of silence and passivity; to find voice and to speak recurs in my work. I consider the words of performance artist and theorist Guillermo Gomez-Pena (2005) when he states that “in fact, our main artwork is our own body, ridden with semiotic, political, ethnographic, cartographic and mythical implications” (2005: 22). Pena’s articulation of how the body functions as a site for inscription and meaning propels my preoccupation with the South African Indian female body in performance. Performance here refers to the theatrical conventional sense as well as engaging with Butler’s (1990 and 1993) theories of performance and performativity of gender and identity.

In contemporary South African society, how does the South African Indian female utilise theatre and performance as a tool and weapon for liberation: beyond the cultural and ‘traditional’ arenas as well as the stereotypical roles brown females are inscribed into? Can the Indian female express and confront violent cycles embedded in the ‘personal and private’ sphere through performance, situating ‘personal problems’ as structurally cultural (Narayan, 1997) and ultimately political. Furthermore, is the brown female body able to contest, transgress and transcend the barriers and limitations of identity, culture, and tradition?

Through practice as research this study has aimed at developing a response to these questions further investigating the ‘invisibility’ of South African Indian female theatre practitioners in a post apartheid theatrical landscape; examining the social, political, and cultural constraints which historically shaped the silence of the female voice. “South African Indian theatre has been defined as a public endeavour and with the exception of few *Indian* women it has been dominated by the *Indian* male voice” (Govender, 2001: 33).

This research looks at South African Indian theatre historically and currently and how it has served as a medium for transgression and self expression in articulating the crisis of identity and representation in post apartheid South Africa. Comedy and satire are critically interrogated as a ‘comfort zone’ within Indian theatre, potentially perpetuating a cycle of

violence and oppression through self ridicule, self deprecation and stereotypical representations; critically examining my own work through this methodology. Comedy or comic theatre, a dominant theatrical genre in Durban is inclined to rehash and reinforce stereotypes often as a means of articulating and expressing the anxieties around the crisis of identity. This is interrogated through my own practice through the use of comedy as a method and medium for transgression. This is explored directly in relation to violence against the female body as a measure of control, discipline, and silencing and ways of sounding, articulating and speaking the trauma, fear, and anxiety.

Feminist scholar Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015) proposes that even though South Africans are aware of how endemic gender-based violence is, “we can undo it only by unmasking the collective denial, that lie that we tell about how we do not know who is abusing and raping up and down the length of South Africa” (2015:68). It is this collective state of denial and shame in relation to the pervasiveness of violence against feminine bodies which I wish to speak about through my work.

Through a de-colonial feminist lens, I interrogate the contradictions that arise around Hinduism and feminism, articulating and interrogating my own identity and subject position as a Hindu feminist artist through performance. I locate the manifestations of violence in relation to the brown female body, questioning the enforced training and expectation of performing gender as an Indian Hindu female. In a quest to demythologise and de-sacralise the Indian female body, the performative case studies for this research provide documentation of how the brown female body interacts with space and the gaze. With installation art being a passive and benign medium of transgression, comedy has proven as an aggressive (albeit passive) and direct method of confronting social and cultural issues.

This research magnifies a lack of South African Indian female voices in the theatrical landscape as I have found that performers mainly operate within the realm of Indian dance and in the private sphere. To my knowledge however, there has been little to no work in the field of performance which seeks to critically engage with the plethora of issues and challenges that South African Indian women face, particularly in the spectrum of violence and the body’s experience through a feminist school of thought. This research challenges this gap in performance by investigating how religio-cultural practices and traditions may

contribute to a 'culture of silence' (Umebinyuo, 2016), arguing that the 'culture of silence' contributes to the docile and naturalised roles brown females are disciplined in to. The "naturalised roles of women under the banner of culture and cultural preservation" (Govender, 2001: 33) together with the multiple Hindu rituals in which, "not only is the earth liturgically and ritually positioned as divine and Female but she is also that which is to be revered, as Mother" (Naidu, 2011:4) tends to inscribe the female body in to specific categories.

Through auto-ethnography, this study traces the violence embedded in practices of gendering the body as I have experienced as a South African Indian female; toward developing a practice which critically challenges the naturalised roles and the notions of the 'ideal Indian woman', examining how these conformities and expectations culturally codify the brown female body.

In speaking about violence and the South African Indian female body through the performative case studies supporting this research, awareness around the pervasive nature of violence and its mechanical workings within culture and tradition in relation to the female body is reinforced. Thus, my research adds to existing knowledge on Indian feminism and theatre in post apartheid South Africa. As this research tackles issues of gender, abuse, violence and the female body in relation to religio-cultural practices and tradition situated within the 'private' sphere, I hope to contribute to the field of performance studies and South African feminist theatre with the intention of developing future research and work.

Research Questions

Primary Research Questions:

1. How have South African Indian females utilised theatre and performance to articulate their own subject position in a post apartheid context?
2. What challenges arise in attempting to transgress and transcend the limitations and barriers of culture and identity as I have experienced?
3. What are the social, political and cultural restrictions that have contributed to the stereotypical gendered representations of the Indian female body?
4. Through my practice, how does my work subvert and shatter stereotypical representations of the brown female body?

Secondary Questions:

1. What are the factors (socio-political and cultural) that contribute to an 'invisibility' of Indian female performer/theatre makers as I have observed and experienced them?

Methodology

This research is located within the paradigm of practice as research or practice-led research. It is through my practice of art making that I attempt to locate, articulate and unpack critical issues in relation to academic theory. Tim Ingold (2000) notes on the radical approach to academic research, that "we descend from the imaginary heights of abstract reason and resituate ourselves in an active and ongoing interaction with our environment" (Ingold, 2000: 16). In examining and unpacking the 'active and ongoing interactions' with my environment as suggested by Ingold (2000), I employed auto-ethnography as my chief theoretical framework of inquiry, situating my research within the South African Indian (Hindu-Tamil) community of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

Auto-ethnography as a research methodology draws from my own experiences, observations and research where the 'personal' and personally cultural is interrogated through practice; while the literature and theory utilised in this paper supports my effort in locating the 'personal' as more structural or structurally cultural (Narayan, 1997). This speaks directly to cultural and traditional practices of the Hindu-Tamil community in relation to the female body as I have experienced it.

In my own creation of three performance works which support this research as case studies, the themes of silence, passivity, violence and oppression recur, seemingly embedded within tradition and culture and forming a common narrative in relation to the brown female body. In recounting my experience and observations of being 'trained' to 'behave' and perform as a 'proper' Indian girl, I connect with theorists Schechner (2002), Foucault (1977), Naidu (2011) in exploring and challenging these methods of training, discipline and control. Butler (1990) notes that "the body" appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself. The specificity of locating and contextualising this study is imperative. South African Indians, although a minority, are a non-homogenous group.

Because it is a tiny community, it is seen from without to be a homogeneous group. Meanwhile, it is an extremely diverse group with different religions, languages, customs, class and political affiliations that lead to all kind of internal tensions (Naidoo: 1993).

This research explore some of these 'internal tensions' from the perspective of being a South African Indian Hindu-Tamil female, locating the brown female body as a site for codification, oppression, and violence; aiming to develop a practice that allows for the body to re-write itself through performance. According to Heddon, "works tightly focused on inequality in relation to identity, though primarily *autobiographical*, are again often *autobiographical*, as the 'personal' is related to the wider cultural and social context, making reference to others almost inevitable" (2008:2). Collectively, the personal interweaves within a grander narrative towards articulating my trajectory.

Questions for Amma (Questions for Mother) denotes a personal narrative of inquiry and is a linguistic dance that combines my 'mother-tongues' of Tamil and English. Female deities within Hinduism are collectively referred to as Amma; a term also used to refer to my paternal grandmother. Alsop (2002) articulates that "dialectic is the purpose as well as the challenge of our work, a challenge as a language is lacking that captures both levels, the personal and the cultural." Alsop refers to those who tackle relations of culture as 'boundary walkers' who "crisscross between the boundaries of being home and away, of being insider and outsider, of being personal and cultural selves" (2002: 10).

In its essence, auto-ethnography goes against the grain of traditional academic research methods which is “empirical observation and critical analysis from a distant perspective” (Conquergood, 2003: 312). It is, however, through this method of study that the previously marginalised voices begin to chart their narratives connecting the personal and the theoretical in order to contest and critique culture from a dynamic perspective of being within. It is through this introspective process of auto-ethnographical research and study, that we are able to become authors of our own culture.

It then becomes my task to negotiate the tensions of “backward and forward, inward and outward” in order to maintain a sense of vigilance and a sense of self reflexivity towards theoretically documenting my practice. It is through introspection and dissection of the personal and cultural, the boundaries that we tread and why we may choose to do so; that we stand a better chance to self represent, to create ways of narrating and writing our own bodies into meaning.

While auto-ethnography is largely a personal and introspective inquiry, it becomes the means through which I carry more than a singular voice. Over the past two years, I have digitally documented ways of image making and speaking within my family and community as South African Indian women. I have collected images and voice recordings which heavily influence the performative and gestural vocabulary I have developed through this research.

Auto-ethnographical research becomes a de-colonial practice and method within this study, a “process in both research and performance of valuing, reclaiming, and foregrounding indigenous voices and epistemologies” (Swadener & Mutua, 2008: 31). It has afforded me to collectively narrate, create, and perform work that speaks in multiple tongues and accents, even when silent. Thus, theory and practice conducted through an auto-ethnographical framework becomes a de-colonial tool for representation of the ‘other,’ critiquing the South African Indian females ‘situatedness’ in performance and theatre in post-apartheid South Africa. This research evokes questions of an otherwise ‘imagined’ body, exploring how the South African Indian female body speaks, through interrogating how it has previously been written, and by whom.

Context

In establishing a context for this research, I will examine the work of two South African Indian female theatre practitioners in a post-1994 context. My practice draws from a diverse range of theatrical and cultural aspects and therefore I explore how the brown female body has been represented in performance with specific reference to the intercultural 'fusion' work of the Surilanga Dance Company of Durban and representations of identity in playwright Krijay Govender's seminal text, *Women in Brown* (1998).

Whilst the theatre is utilised by many groups as a weapon of liberation...it has not been fully explored by South African Indian women to articulate their own subject position. This is mainly because the naturalised roles of women under the banner of culture and cultural preservation confine women to the private sphere (Govender, 2001: 33).

This thesis supports and builds on Govender's (2001) observation that "theatre has not been fully explored by South African Indian women to articulate their own subject position", unpacking why this issue continues in 2017. The two chosen works are connected to my study of South African Indian female voices in theatre, with both artists articulating the struggles of brown female identity in relation to tradition and culture in a transforming South Africa. The theatre industry continues to be a male dominated space, with Indian women mostly confined to traditional and vernacular theatre within the private sphere. My initial artistic training began in vernacular theatre through Tamil eisteddfods, a theatrical tool for cultural preservation in a transforming South Africa. Muthal Naidoo (1993) notes:

Once the influence of Western education began to be felt, probably in the forties, there developed a concern to preserve and propagate Indian languages and cultural values. Vernacular drama was supported in vernacular schools at which some form of dramatic activity, including music and dance, was practised and in eisteddfods, which encouraged competition in drama, music and dance. Eisteddfods still continue to the present day and cultural exchange programmes with India give new strength to vernacular theatrical performances. The vernacular drama, in my opinion, was an easy prey for assimilation into apartheid culture. Because of the determination to preserve separate traditions, culture came to be regarded as unchanging and fixed and theatre developments that were expressions of a South African social, economic and political reality were not regarded as authentic (1993).

This research seeks to highlight Naidoo's succinct observation that vernacular theatre "was an easy prey for assimilation into apartheid culture" (1993). My experience of vernacular theatre supports the notion that through the determination of cultural preservation there breeds an insularity and separateness in the arts in Indian society which echoes greater socio-political concerns for South African Indians. My own immersion in vernacular art

forms contradicted the linguistic dynamics of my household. The spoken languages that permeated through my home and school life were a mixture of English, Tamil, and isiZulu. I was efficient in my speaking and understanding isiZulu as a child while acquiring the skill to parrot Tamil without any real understanding. Amma, my grandmother was fluent in all three languages speaking Tamil, English, and isiZulu effortlessly. As a spectator and student of her various performances of each language, I grew up to intimately understand the power of language: isiZulu was often used to command and instruct; Tamil was used with her sisters, on my mother, and to discuss confidential matters; and in English, bluddie,³ swine, shit or rubbish was her familiar utterance. These performances take the form of linguistic dances of power and oppression, aggression and control, love and loathing. Muthal Naidoo (1993) articulates the complexities of Indian identity and is thus quoted at length:

Though origins influence perceptions of identity, the major influence stems from the material conditions of living in South Africa. What 'Indians' have in common with all other groups is the culture of apartheid; enforced racism has entrenched fixed notions of identity in some groups and led to the questioning of ethnic identities in others. Being Black people (though apartheid consciousness does not include Indians among Black people), subjected to a dominant culture, and like other groups, assimilating western customs and behaviours, we developed ambivalence towards our origins. As we came to regard our own traditions as inferior, we began to discard them. What we preserve are those elements that are acceptable to the dominant group, superficial elements that seem 'exotic,' such as saris and samoosas. [...] The dominance of European cultural values has led to emulation of White norms, values and customs at all levels. Some 'Indians' deny their origins in the lifestyles, speech and mannerisms that they have adopted. Others acknowledge the strong influence of the West on their socialization and accept their assimilation without denying their origins. Still others, recognising and repudiating the pernicious effects of cultural domination, assert their right to be called African. In the 'Indian' community, therefore, the search for identity, an ongoing process, is an unspoken element in all cultural, social and political activities and inherent in the efforts of theatre workers (Naidoo, 1993).

The issues around identity tend to persist as a crisis of identity and crisis of representation (Hanson, 2000) in South African Indian communities and theatre. Identity forms a fluid part of the South African Indian female narrative as the body metaphorically, and at times literally, weaves between continents, cultures, languages, social structures and hierarchies. The effort to determine identity for women of colour is bound to the struggles of race and gender.

Lastly, I wish to critically engage with the notion of comic theatre being a dominant theatrical form in the Indian community. It is my intent to interrogate the popularity of comedy and its potential to perpetuate a cycle of oppression through self deprecation and rehashing and reinforcing stereotypes. I rely on the observations by Thomas Blom Hanson

³ **Bluddie**- Pidgin English pronunciation of the English term 'bloody'

(2000) in relation to the play, *Mooidevi's Muti* (1998). Through a critical feminist lens, I broadly unpack the representation of the Indian female as she is stereotypically illustrated, noting the absence of an actual female voice. The use of comedy by Indian performers to express uninhibited alter ego's who are able to speak directly is a common occurrence in Indian theatre and is often performed through drag.

Part One

In this chapter, I will explore and unpack the transgressive elements in the choreographic work of Suria Govender as she begins to subvert traditional notions inscribed on the dancing Indian female body, challenging notions of cultural preservation towards charting new narratives. The work of Krijay Govender's play text *Women in Brown* (1998) seeks to highlight the power of representation as I reflect on my own experience and encounter with this particular text. Furthermore, this chapter argues around the idea that comedy, a popular and dominant genre of performance in Durban Indian theatre may perpetuate a cycle of oppression. I reflect on my own use of comedy within this research, examining ways of subverting the use of accent and stereotyping that is prevalent in Indian theatre, with reference to Thomas Blom Hansens (2000) observations of the play, *Mooidevi's Muti* (1998).

Tracing Indian Theatre in Durban

Historically, theatre in the form of song, dance, and drama formed an intrinsic part of the life of Indian people from the time of indenture. "Wherever the indentured went, they established religiously oriented theatre, especially what became known as the 'Ramayana' tradition- an important part of the Hindu canon which was acted out regularly (Desai & Vahed, 2010: 307). The 'Ramayana' tradition holds a great significance in the lives of Indian Hindus. The epic story of good triumphing over evil and of Lord Rama and Mother Sita as a symbol of an ideal couple influence and shape many lives. It is also a tool for representation which perpetuates patriarchal domination within the community. "Sita was portrayed as a docile and faithful wife; Rama was a brave warrior and Ravana as evil" (2010:307).

It should be noted here, that portrayals of Sita as the ideal wife in performances of The Ramayana would have served to reinforce the image of the Indian Hindu female as subservient, submissive and the ultimate symbol of purity. It is unclear as to whether or not

Indian women actually portrayed the female roles in performance, as cross-dressing was a common performance practice utilised with males playing the roles of females. The absence of women in the performance arena could be seen in the street dance known as Terukuttu or 'six-foot' dance (2010:307).

Where Terukuttu was performed, indentured migrants from several estates would usually meet to perform in the open air. Only men acted, even playing roles of women. [...] The most popular figure in the dance was the clown, or komali, who provided comic relief, but also focused on social issues, local politicians and community affairs. Terukuttu contained music, dance and poetry. While conforming to western theatrical conventions, such as the use of suspense, conflict and climax, it was based on religious literature and had strong religious connotations (2010: 310).

Although the indentured community were reliant on the arts to provide a source of relief and entertainment from the harsh realities of life on the plantations, there is a distinct absence of female voice and physical presence. This could be accounted for due to the heavy gender ratio inequality at that time (Desai & Vahed, 2010). It interests me to learn that the indentured community relied heavily on theatre as a source of healing and community building, with particular intrigue around the comic figure in Terukuttu being the clown or 'komali', whose anticipation and popularity resonates in present day theatrical traditions. Interestingly, comedy or comic theatre tends to prevail as a dominant genre of theatre within KwaZulu-Natal, with a large number of theatre practitioners who market their work through this genre.

Dancing the democratic landscape

Durban based Surialanga Dance Company⁴ is an intercultural company comprising of Indian women and Zulu men, who through a fusing of Bharatha Natyam⁵ with traditional Zulu dance, introduce a newly democratic South African audience to a performance language that attempts to speak to this. An exchange of gestures and intimate interactions occur as these previously segregated dancing bodies share a stage, artistic director and choreographer Suria Govender begins to bravely tread on subversive territory, challenging notions of identity and representation in a post apartheid theatrical context.

⁴ **Surialanga**- Suria/Surya refers to the Sun in Sanskrit while 'Langa' is drawn from 'Illanga' meaning sun in isiZulu. Suria is also the name of founder and choreographer, Suria Govender.

⁵ **Bharatha Natyum** (Tamil)- A Hindu classical and gestural dance form originating in Tamil Nadu, India which expresses Hindu themes and storytelling through dance.

Through a confluence of cultural and traditional styles, not particularly viewed as ‘art’ in the Western sense, the dancing Indian female alongside the Zulu black male decked in traditional costumes begins to transgress the insularity related to the Indian female performer being kept within the ‘private sphere’. The issues surrounding intercultural theatre arise when one begins to unpack the complexities of contradictory representation in a broader socio-political sense. Smitha Radhakrishnan (2003) explains that,

This portrayal of interculturalism belies not only the complexity of African-Indian relations that are overlooked to produce a compelling choreographed production...the intercultural project acts as a microcosm of cross-cultural interaction in the “new South Africa,” but these interactions consist of exchanges that are ultimately laced with contradictions, potentially challenging the underlying democratic ideal (2003: 530).

The work of this dance company forms part of my historical background and introduction to theatre, dance and Indian women in performance in post apartheid South Africa. I received minor training in Bharatha Natyam and understood that this form of dance gave young Indian women a particular social standing within the Indian community; a symbol of middle-class upbringing, connecting them to mother-culture practices⁶ Bharatha Natyam dancers’ training culminates in an Arrangetram⁷ ceremony which is an elaborate and often decadent gathering to display their work throughout the years. It should be duly noted that classical Indian dancers were kept within the private sphere, circulating within their communities.

Govender affirms that dancers were encouraged to share technique “although they were sometimes divided into two or three groups within the larger group, an interdependence was continuously visible between them” (1994). It is clear that Govender sought to transcend the limitations of identity and representation by subverting the norms of classical Indian dance by creating a style of dance theatre in which two previously marginalized bodies attempt to (re)make meaning. However, “the presentation of an intercultural project in a celebratory fusion of dance styles conceals a number of divisions related to race, class, gender, and sexuality” (2003: 531-532) which will be discussed.

Radhakrishnan (2003) observed the social and political dynamics of the dancers in a rehearsal space and states that her involvement in conjunction with her “outsider” status

⁶ **Mother-culture practices** (Narayan, 1997) - A concept that is explored in the final chapters and speaks to the connection females form through the practices of one’s imagined idea of the ‘motherland’.

⁷ **Arrangetram**- A graduation ceremony for Bharatha Natyum dancers which is a grand showcase of all their work.

gave her a unique perspective on the constraints and possibilities of the company, while involving herself outside the company in the larger classical Indian dance community of Durban allowed her to gain insight into the controversial and threatening aspects of “fusion” dance for a community that is fixed on sustaining its “Indianness” in a post – apartheid world. “At its base, the presentation of an intercultural project in a celebratory fusion of dance styles conceals a number of divisions related to race, class, gender, and sexuality”(2003: 531-532).

In examining the work of the Surialanga Dance Company, “the choice of racially Indian women to represent “Indianness” and Zulu-speaking African men to represent “Africanness” already sets into motion a number of racialised and sexualized dynamics”(2003: 532). Radhakrishnan (2003) asks how the images of interculturalism portrayed in the choreography map onto the actual interactions between dancers, further questioning whether these representations relate to the lived experiences of the dancers themselves (2003: 532).

The various boundaries separating these men and women (race, class, gender, economic standing) appear to be transcended during their performances, painting a unified and transcendental depiction of what “fusion” dance served to do at the time. In reality, these men and women may not (read cannot) engage with each other outside of performance due to socio-political barriers that linger long after they have been ‘torn’ down. While it is easier for audience members to lull into the “rainbow nation realised” through the mesmerizing choreographic work, it is imperative to note that there was an imbalance in power dynamics. Indian dancers adopted fragments of choreography from the Zulu men, while remaining in their traditional costumes. The Indian performers were always presented in this way while the black dancers not only adopt Bharatha Natyam as a dance form, but in costume and make up as well. This is something that has been duly accounted for by Govender as she acknowledges ‘Indian culture as “the dominant structure that informed the piece” stating that she, “the creator had to be conscious of falling into the trap of being subsumed by the ideology of cultural imperialism” (Govender, 1994).

When the power dynamics within this dance company are considered; we begin to contest the socio-economic-political inequality that segregates these bodies. As a newly democratic

South Africa, it is impossible for the choreography to truly reflect either of the dancers' circumstances in terms of the presentational aesthetics. It (the dance work) results as an imagined reflection of a society that is hopefully emerging, rather than a truthful depiction of the complex process of integrating two: genders, races, classes and cultures.

The power dynamics also call into question whether Indian female performers dancing with black male performers is at its base, an act of transgression. Govender confronts the issues surrounding intercultural performances, noting that fusion artists risk being 'accused of cultural appropriation if a ritual is taken out of context,' further stating that critics and purists within South African Indian communities deem:

interculturalism and fusion acceptable as long as the Indian artefact is kept pure. It is not to be changed in any way to include any other culture or language. What therefore becomes acceptable is a foregrounding of the artefact of the subsidiary culture by the pure Indian artefact thereby perpetuating the latter's cultural superiority (Govender, 1994).

In relation to my trajectory, I position the Indian female body in performance as the 'Indian artefact' meant to be 'kept pure', a symptom of cultural preservation in an assimilating society. The racial tensions between Zulu and Indian community remains historically unresolved to this day. The perpetuated stereotypes and internal racial conflict that lives on in KwaZulu-Natal often goes unexamined. Govender takes a post-1994 step towards sparking conversation through dance.

The intimacy of the choreography...threatens exclusive ideas of Indianess by allowing Indian women to interact closely with African men. Thus, although utilizing a fixed, gendered, notion of Indianess, Surialanga challenges that very notion through its choreography by imagining a South African Indian woman whose identity is intimately linked to a distinctly African heritage (2003: 536)

We thus begin to see the 'Indian artefact' re-create herself through the dancing body as it intimately speaks to the masculine representation of 'African' in the dancing Zulu male body. The choreographic work seeks to reflect the complexities of the time by challenging notions of 'Indianess' and who the bearers of said 'Indianess' may be, transcending the limitations of 'identity' by articulating through dance and the body, a 'South African Indian woman who is intimately connected to her African heritage' (2003: 536). This subverts the very notions of identity; creating a sense of possibility for the South African Indian woman to self-define.

Staging brown female identities

The unpublished play text titled *Women in Brown* (1998) is the work of South African Indian playwright, director and performer Krijay Govender. The play intricately explores South African Indian female identities in a post apartheid context, drawing from traditional and cultural 'norms' within the community that render the Indian female voiceless or victim. The play text is driven towards highlighting the patriarchal dominance within South African Indian society and attempts to subvert this by asserting the identity and voice of brown females. This text is pertinent to my trajectory in terms of it being the first and only play by a South African Indian female writer that I have engaged with during my studies as an undergraduate student of Drama at the University of KwaZulu- Natal (Howard Collage).

Three central female characters who are distinctly different to the other, each articulate their struggles in negotiating tradition and culture, asserting the ways in which they are both South African but also Indian. The female characters also play the three male characters written in the play, subverting theatrical representations of not only the South African Indian female, but notions of passivity and silence. Govender disrupts the private sphere dwelling that 'safe guards' Indian women from speaking their truth. In her paper, Malimba notes:

Using the particular space of post-1994 theatre, South African playwright Krijay Govender, in her seminal play text titled *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002), explores specifically South African Indian *female* identities, within the context of post-apartheid South Africa. *Women in Brown* (In chetty, 2002) is Govender's attempt at asserting South African Indian female/ness as belonging within South African society and post-apartheid theatre making. Recognising Indian identity as a male-dominated discourse which even in a post-1994 context comprises the prevailing culture of Indian women within spaces of reticence, confinement and disenfranchisement, Govender's play text becomes a feminist statement that Indian women should be visible within the public domain [...] (Malimba, 2012: 80) In citing South African female performed identities as they existed- and continue to exist in spaces of domination and violence, Govender challenges patriarchal notions and stereotypes of South African Indian female/ness and instead, prompts the construction of alternative racial and cultural South African female Indian identities in a post-apartheid, multicultural theatre landscape (2012:80)

I recall a first year monologue exam in which students had to choose one prescribed piece and write an original piece. The syllabus included three monologues from *Women in Brown* (1998) for students to choose from. What interests me is that a large number of Indian female students had opted to play the character of Mona. In the play text, Govender creates the character of Mona who defies all stereotypical notions of 'traditional Indian female' by asserting independence over her body and her life. She smokes, does not dream of marriage

and is an independent business woman. I was also one of those Indian female students who sort to find ways of being outside of tradition, identifying with and desperately seeking to embody a character who broke free from the binds of tradition and culture. “Mona was and still is very popular choice of monologue amongst Indian female students, trying to rebel against rigid patriarchal beliefs” (Munsamy, personal communication 2017, June 12). What this proves is that theatre and performance may be viewed as a limitless space- an arena in which the brown female body may begin to redefine, re-represent and speak.

I have been inclined to reflect on and unpack the kinds of work that Indian female theatre students have created when given the opportunity. While there were so few monologues for women of colour, let alone Indian women, there was and is a tendency for young Indian females to speak or voice issues of abuse (Craighead, personal communication 2017, June 12). Whether these utterances emerged through writing, choreography, or acting, the performance realm proves as a space for the ‘other’ to find voice, to speak and to shatter illusionary and oppressive stereotypes inscribed on the brown female body.

⁸Coolie to ⁹Charou: A cycle of oppression?

Theatre in the Indian community has remained separate from other racial groups in a post-apartheid South Africa in keeping with the apartheid segregation laws which informed this seclusion. Indians staged plays in schools, community halls and cinemas (Naidoo, 1993). To this day, Indian theatre lives on in this fashion with local performers staging their shows in community halls and schools, giving the community access to their work while also generating an income.

Almost a century and a half later, comedy remains a dominant genre in Indian theatre in KwaZulu-Natal, with a larger South African Indian audience following. It is my personal observation and one of the driving forces of this research to explore why the popularity of comedy may have endured over time, highlighting what could be viewed as the perpetuation of a violent cycle of self deprecation and self ridicule within a marginalized community as a means to self express. On the other hand, the theatrical genre of comedy

⁸ Coolie- derogatory term for person of Indian race in a South African context.

⁹ Charou- colloquial slang for slightly darker person, i.e. Indian person.

permits performers to speak in a direct approach, to articulate the personal and the political - a vocal means of direct theatrical expression.

Thomas Blom Hansen in his essay *Plays, politics and cultural identity among Indians in Durban* (2000), observes the themes and forms in Indian theatre and examines how this reflects on a South African Indian community. Durban playwright, Aldrin Naidoo's *Mooidevi's Muti* (1998) revolved around the publicised divorce scandal between Ashadevi and Amichand Rajbansi. Blom (2000) notes on Ashadevi's position:

"She was also facing the entire web of conventions regarding the appropriate ways of a proper Indian wife- modesty, chastity and loyalty. Through the maze of intimate details being made public and the many letters to the editor it became evident that what fuelled the imagination as well as the indignation of the Indian public was less the fact of the divorce than the style in which it was publicly represented. The debate about the divorce and the countless jokes it gave rise to revolved around two central concerns among Indians in contemporary South Africa: on the one hand, the public and the political representation of the 'community', both in a formal political sense and in terms of the larger public image of what 'Indians' are like; and, on the other hand, the decline of the 'Indian family' and the strong familial ideology that still surrounds it, in the face of loss of the vernacular tongues, upward social mobility, 'westernization' and what many older Indians describe as loose morals among younger people (2000: 255-256).

The play itself serves as a satirical farce as a "rephrasing of older and well-known forms of joking and slapstick comedy" (2000: 258). The title of the play draws from multiple languages and cultures, attempting to reflect a South African identity which "brings forth the central ambiguity of the public figure of ¹⁰Ashadevi Rajbansi- her vanity, vulnerability and her cunning opportunism. *Mooi* means pretty in Afrikaans while *moo* in Tamil means lazy; *devi* refers to the name Ashadevi, but also its Hindi meaning as goddess; while 'muti' (Zulu *umuti*, traditional medicine) signifies a dimension of African culture that is particularly beset by popular myths and rumours" (2000: 256). The title itself seeks to inscribe on and codify the female character's body in a myriad of ways. This is indicative of the patriarchal threads within Indian society with a layering of stereotypical notions associated with Indian women. The portrayal of Ashadevi "as obsessed with beauty-boxes, money, jewelry and status. [...] her heavily accented and caricatured South African Indian English" echoes the patriarchal construction of Indian female identity (2000: 258).

Hanson (2000) observes that "what the continuities and innovations in themes and form of Indian theatre over the last decades can tell us about the condition of possibilities for

¹⁰ The absence of Ashadevi's voice is highlighted by Amichand making nightly guest appearances in the play, generating publicity towards his political career while connecting with the community through humour (Hanson, 2000).

representing ‘the community’ among Indians in Durban” is that “the Indian ‘community’ not only is faced with a deep crisis of identity in the post-apartheid scenario, but is also caught up in a crisis of representation- a wider South African phenomenon“(2000: 256). The play makes reference to vices and stereotypes associated with being Indian in South Africa by inserting ways of being and speaking which the community were able to reflect and connect with, as they watch “elements of their own world in the style of joking, speaking and saucy humour in the play” (2000: 258) These comic devices however, tend to create an insularity around the community, ironically fuelling this ‘crisis of representation’ (Hanson: 2000).

The crisis of identity and crisis of representation remains ongoing within South African Indian theatre. Hanson notes that “the years of 1983-1984 saw Indian theatre turning away from political problematics of race and struggle, towards comedy, almost exclusively focusing on issues internal to the community” (2000: 260). Comedy forms a kind of comfort zone; dominating the Indian theatre scene in Durban with the last decade seeing a number of shows written and produced by South African Indian artists whose narrative was commonly threaded through the genre of comedy.

In ‘alternate’ scripts with a multi racial cast, most Indian characters (both male and female) tend to be written into shows purely for comic relief and when this is not the case, the Indian character is more often than not, expected to perform stereotypical aspects associated with ‘Indian identity’. This can range from ‘typical’ accents or pitch of voice, to one of the many inscribed ‘types’ of Indians. American comedian, Aziz Ansari voices similar frustration in his Netflix comedy-series *Master of None* (2015). In the episode titled “Indians on TV” written by Anzari and Alan Young, two actors at an audition discuss how they are constantly scripted into accented and stereotypical roles (2015, November 6), proving a wider phenomenon and global struggle of representation within the arts.

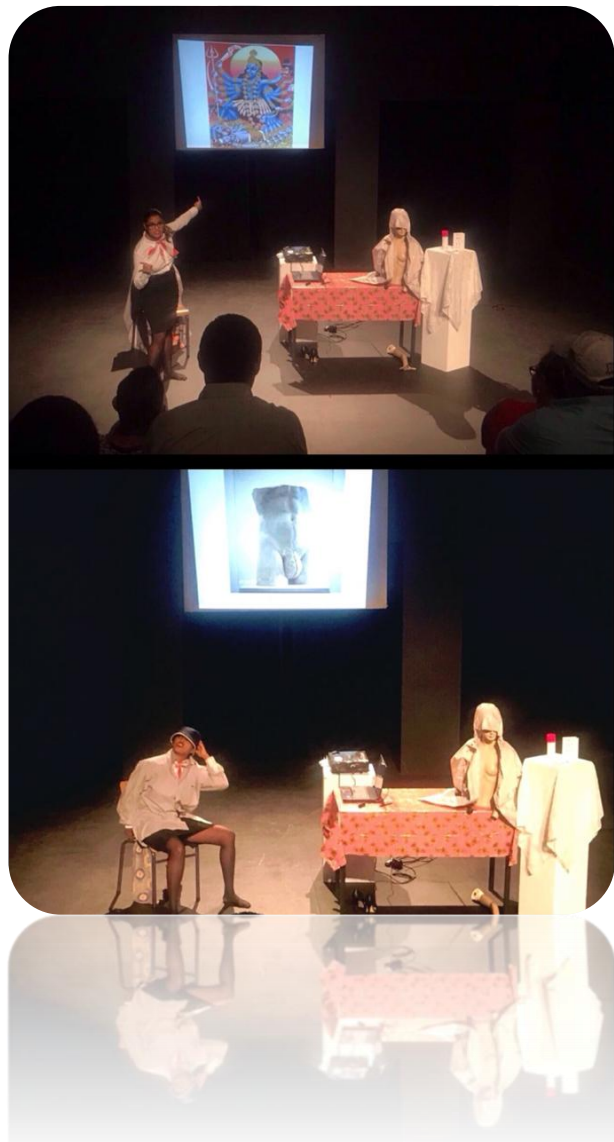
Specifically looking at the representations of Indian females, the common stereotypes extend to over bearing mother-in-law, the submissive/‘modern’ daughter/in-law, the girl who dreams of her wedding or the middle aged aunty who is semi educated and is thus ‘inappropriately’ humorous. These are broad examples of representing a ‘type’ of Indian female. There is a trend and tendency with regards to the portrayal of older Indian women be it on television or in theatre and film- in which a sense of freedom and abandonment

materialises in the often quirky portrayal of the older woman character. A few of arguably the strongest South African Indian female performers who are multi-disciplined artists in the field of entertainment and performance are most popular in the genre of comedy. Krijay Govender, Leeanda Reddy and Jailoshini Naidoo are well-known comedians whose artistic skills range from directing and acting to scriptwriting and playmaking. Be it for film, television or theatre, however, the dominant form of performance that threads through these three performers is comedy.

Comedy and satire may very well be the cathartic approach to finding voice as I have explored in my own work as part of this research and will reflect on. However, it potentially represents an ongoing cycle of internal oppression which I will further discuss. In staging my solo show *How NOT to ask for IT and other tips*, I began to explore the medium of comedy through the body of an alternate representation of a South African Indian female.

Illustration 1 & 2 (right): 'Sariksha Saraswati Gopal' in How NOT to ask for IT and other tips. Arena Theatre. University of Cape Town, Hiddingh Campus. 2017. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photos by Kate Jaskolski

In exploring the themes of harassment and rape in South Africa, I attempted to create a voice which began to speak fear and frustration through performance. Comedy employed the means of passive aggression, a subtle expression of violence and defence. Passive aggression through comedy becomes an articulate defence mechanism in the brown body claiming a sense of space and power. Direct in its nature, comedy becomes a powerful medium through which the alternate character speaks as a contemporary brown female body in performance, shifting between stereotypical gender and racial roles.



I sought to examine comedy and its use of caricature and stereotypes, attempting to subvert 'Indian comedy' trends by attempting to break the stereotypes from within. This meant that character has to become the stereotype, subverting from within. This became the impetus for giving the character a distinctly South Asian accent belonging to the Tamil community of Durban, one of the key features in conventional comedy shows within the Indian community. The use of accent as a tool of comedy in Indian theatre speaks to the loss of language within the community and among the diaspora: a way of speaking that does not privilege the English language, but rather bastardises it, unifying a diasporic community through a hybrid language of 'Indian English'. Geographically unique to the Indian community of Durban, accent, although personal, makes reference to the fact that many Indian diaspora cannot speak their mother tongues which then renders accent as equally political. Hanson (2000) notes that feelings of non-recognition within the Indian community have turned into a strong sense of marginalisation with regards to the neglect of Indian language, culture and opportunities. It has given birth to paranoia and anxieties associated with crime and economic opportunities, leading Indian people to exhibit an "elusive sense of being invisible and being unrecognized as individuals and as a group" (2000: 267). Hanson further notes that:

The elusive sense of Indianness has to be tapped from negative stereotypes and from long tradition of self-deprecation in community theatre. There is a latent need for the humour and irony to deal with these anxieties. [...] The irony and the self-mockery is, however, deeply ambivalent as it negotiates the slippery terrain of current Indian identity. Much of the ironic appropriation of the older 'coolie' stereotypes- funny accents, superstition, snobbery and patriarchal control of women- seems to signify a celebration of the successful social mobility away from working-class life. The accents of the uneducated, the figure of the superstitious auntie and the severe father figure are funny because they have already been left behind. Laughing at lewd jokes, mocking 'family values' and political leaders, ways of dealing with anxieties and bewilderment in the face of the actual dissolution of these previewed pillars of the 'community'. But the use of humour also indicates a certain disarming broadmindedness and signals a capacity from critical self-introspection to the outside gaze. The paradox is of course that in spite of this more subtle quest for recognition informing Indian 'ethnic farces', they presuppose and reproduce most of the genres, the jokes and the references that were internal in the first place, and seem in effect to perpetuate the ethnic closure they mock in so many ways (2000: 267-268).

While comedy is a means of dealing with and articulating anxieties around issues of identity, it reinforces stereotypes that become locked into the ethnic identity of what it means to be South African Indian. In the scripting and staging of *How NOT to ask for IT and other tips*, I chose to subvert the use of a South African Indian accent by representing an individual who is educated and articulate and who does not self deprecate but rather commands and

speaks directly to her audience, authoritative through the comedic structure of the script. Furthermore, the South African Indian representation is subversive in articulating trauma and violence on the brown female body through performance. In aiming to transgress and transcend the boundaries of identity, comedy has ironically proven to be one of the strongest mediums through which the brown female body speaks.

Male voices in the form of playwrights, performers and theatre makers have long since dominated the theatrical space.

While men playwrights and theatre practitioners were successful in creating a voice for themselves through which the issues of race and class (as categories of oppression) received attention, they did so at the expense of the South African Indian woman. The presentation of South African Indian women in their plays reinforces gender stereotypes. The presentation is often justified within fixed notions of culture and cultural identity (Govender, 2001: 36-37).

In locating the most transgressive female voice in performance currently, the character of *Aunty Sheila* (Naicker, 2017) the alter ego of Durban based performer Theshen Naicker, whose performances are recorded and shared on social media, reaching a wider audience viewing through the distribution and sharing of videos. *Aunty Sheila* (Naicker, 2017) is a 58 year old proud Tamil mother of two who is happily married and is far from inhibited, tackling cultural and contemporary practices within the Indian community with candour. Naicker's careful construction of this character, a sort of agony aunt, who challenges rigid patriarchal beliefs advocating for feminine bodies through playing out various stereotypes, also takes the comic approach as a method to speak through. While the subject matter tackled through the voice of *Aunty Sheila* (Naicker, 2017) speaks directly to the crisis of identity, voicing various internal anxieties faced by many South African Indians; it should be duly noted that this performance is essentially in drag, pointing to an essentially male voice being the most prominent and transgressive (performing) 'as' a South African Indian Hindu-Tamil female in theatre.

While I remain critical of comedy as a performance medium, acknowledging its power to perpetuate 'ethnic farces' that ridicule a marginalised community, I am also able to acknowledge the profound value comic theatre holds as a medium through which marginalised voices are able to speak. It becomes a limitless space for the brown female body, able to embody personas in order to 'speak'. However, I remain critically aware of the fact that while comic theatre provides a resolve for the crisis of identity for South African

Indians, the reinforcement of stereotypes, accent, self deprecation and self ridicule perpetuate a cycle of self violence and oppression, secluding the Indian community from the wider theatrical landscape in South Africa, thus fuelling the crisis of representation. “The problem may be that the legacy of irony, [...] a tradition that for decades had made the internal debates in the Indian community in Durban so lively and has contributed to establishing strong democratic traditions- may be jeopardized if turned into markers of a commercially marketed ethnicity” (2000: 268).

Part Two

There are various problematic issues around third world feminism which may be regarded as “one more incarnation of a colonised consciousness, the views of privileged women in whiteface” (Narayan, 1997). However, this chapter seeks to trace the intrinsic feminist nature in the lives of South African Indian women beyond the academy, scholarship, and language as I have observed and discovered through my work.

Many Third-World women who do not consider themselves feminists know and acknowledge that women face mistreatment within their social contexts and cultural institutions. Feminist daughters are not the only ones who see that motherlands are spaces where fathers still have most of the privileges and power, and that mothers and mother-cultures relate differently to their daughters than they do to their sons, imposing different demands and expecting different forms of conformity. What may set feminist daughters apart is the ways in which they insist that these differences require us to rethink notions of what it is to be at home in a culture, and to redefine notions of “cultural loyalty, betrayal, and respect” in ways that do not privilege the experiences of men (1997:9).

This chapter unpacks how my practice approaches redefining and rethinking notions of home and culture (Narayan, 1997), critically questioning and engaging with these notions through a feminist lens and in performance.

On being a Hindu feminist

I do not write into patriarchy. My Maamma bays for blood. My Kali kills. My Draupadi strips. My Sita climbs on to a stranger’s lap. All my women militate. They brave bombs, they belittle kings. They take on the sun, they take after me. [...] This tongue allows me to resist rape, to rescue my dreams. My language is not man-made; it is beyond the white-hot rules of your seminal texts. My language is dark and dangerous and desperate in its eagerness to slaughter your myths. [...] The criticism that I embark on, like your codification and like my cunt, is beyond all culture (Kandasamy, 2010).

While most religions are structured within a dominant patriarchal paradigm, Hinduism highlights a balance between feminine and masculine energies, presenting an image of equality. Hindu female deities or goddesses play a key role in the construction of Indian female identity which this section aims to unpack, locating the fabric of patriarchy within

particular constructions of being the 'ideal Hindu female' and performing as an 'ideal Indian woman'. I examine Hinduism from the perspective of culture and tradition as I have observed and practised it, noting that Hinduism has thrived in a non-Indian context on South African soil, adapting to the South African conditions (Sooklal:1991).

One of the most important contexts for learning religious culture in Hinduism is the home- the family unit, where children are taught by example and through story telling by their parents and relatives. Ritual obligations are learned by imitating the elders in the joint family (1991: 82).

My feminist thought and practice subconsciously emerged from observing the inequality and injustice that borders the lines of traditional values (such as respect and obey your elders), even when said values (if unquestioned) leads to a silencing of the self. A girl child is not told she is a feminist, but rather that she is rebellious, disrespectful and out of order. It became clear that speaking out loud and questioning translated to an act of disobedience. "In our personal lives...the power to silence another is not simply the power to prevent her talk: it is also the power to shape and control her talk, to restrict the things that she may talk about and the ways she is permitted to express them, to permit her to speak, but to suppress her authentic voice" (1991: 389). Methods of silencing the female in order to mould her into an obedient performer begin from an early age for the Hindu female.

My inclination towards speech over silence was incited by witnessing my mother being oppressed by her mother-in law and it being almost customary and a testament to my mother's value as a wife and daughter-in law if she endured her oppression quietly and with grace. In situating this 'personal' form of abuse and oppression in the public sphere through mediums of performance or performative acts in the form of writing, speaking, performance and art, there begins a dismantling of a culture of silence and passivity as brown bodies begin speaking out. Similarly, Narayan (1997) articulates the location of her own development of feminist thought through witnessing her mother's suffering under patriarchal structures within the home and culture. "[...] earlier than school and "westernization," a call to rebellion that has a different and more primary root, that was not conceptual or English, but in the mother-tongue"(1997:8). Sharada Sugirtharajah (2002) notes that Indian women who call themselves feminists have little to do with religion, preferring to distance themselves from it, dismissing it as being restrictive and oppressive (2002: 98). Although Hinduism includes the worship of powerful female deities who are as equally forceful as their male counterparts, there are many instances in which embedded

patriarchal traditions have contributed to my distancing from the religio-cultural faith. Within the walls of a temple, I find myself forced to conform to abstaining from prayer during menstruation and respecting boundaries which only males are permitted to inhabit. However, I am able to create a parallel space in performance that interrogates the gendered boundaries within Hinduism, replicating and performing the traditional as I re-interpret it in what can be considered the social and public space of theatre and performance. I am by no means a scholar of Hinduism and therefore my approach toward tackling the complexities of my Hindu feminist thought practice stems from my understanding of what it means to be a Hindu woman from my experience.

Karuvil: Part One

The concept of shame presents as one of the most violent and powerful tools of control and discipline over the brown female body. In creating conversation around the concept of shame, considering the exclusion of menstruating females, ***Karuvil: Part One*** served as my minor project. This performative installation included the prayers and wishes of twenty females of all ages and religious faiths, written on panty liners and exhibited towards the sanctification of an alternate space. Gender performativity and inequality is explored in this piece, challenging the passive roles the brown female body is inscribed into.

Illustration 3 (above): Karuvil: Part One. Bindery Dressing Room. University of Cape Town, Hiddingh Campus. 2016. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Dean Hutton



Illustration 4
(right) *Karuvil:*
Part One. Bindery
Dressing Room,
University of Cape
Town, Hiddingh
Campus. 2016.
Performer:
Kivithra Naicker



In an attempt to disrupt and destabilise the patriarchal aspects that actively exclude women from performance in prayer spaces, this work served to transgress the norms of a cultural space by inviting participants of all faiths and genders to contribute toward the sanctification and demonstration by offering a wish or prayer written on a panty liner, challenging the constructs and concepts of shame and disgust as it is inscribed on the female body. Audience feedback has been an imperative aspect with regards to shedding the insularity around this kind of subject matter. Feedback around this project varied with some cautioning towards a perceived exoticism of the Hindu Indian female body in its natural and private dwelling; while others found it to be a private, passive and peaceful space. A personal inspiration for this research has been to trace a feminist tradition among South African Indian females beyond the Western academy. In her article, Subeshini Moodley (2008) self reflexively discusses her research efforts with particular focus on South African Indian Hindu women. She notes that representations of them were inscribed in religious discourse to perpetuate the status of Indian women as symbols of nationalist ideals (2008: 116). While within Hinduism, femininity is worshipped in fiercely revered Goddesses such as Kali teaching women about their own divinity and strength; Goddess Sita/Lakshmi represent dual qualities of purity, prosperity and being a devoted wife. This forms the model requirements for what it means to be an ideal Hindu woman which is often complex to negotiate for women in modern day society.

Through the participation of women in the community, a sense of authorship on the subject of the exclusion of menstruating women from the prayer space is created, thereby contributing to the creation of an inclusive sacred space. No longer is the “problem” of

menstruation a personal one. It becomes a shared subject which the women consider and question, opening up to conversations about other “personal problems” that are actually deeply political.

The central ceremony of patriarchal religions is one in which men take over the yoni-power of creation by giving birth symbolically. No wonder male religious leaders so often say that humans were born in sin- because we were born to female creatures. Only by obeying the rule of the patriarchy can we be reborn through men. No wonder they make priesthood tires to keep women away from the altar, just as women are kept away from control of our own powers of reproduction. Symbolic or real, it’s all devoted to controlling the power that resides in the female body (Steinham, 1998, pxvii).

This directly relates to the gender inequality and division within the structures of temples and traditional and cultural practices. Males often perform the ‘lead roles’ in Hindu rituals, with the role of priesthood being male dominated. *Karuvil: Part One* subverts the role of priest by placing a female performer as priestess, challenging the hierarchical structure and rigid gender inequality embedded within religio-cultural practice. Narayan (1997) asserts that:

An awareness of the gender dynamics within one’s “culture,” even a critical awareness, does not suffice to make women feminists. Women may be aware of such dynamics but may consider them to be personal problems to be dealt with personally, without seeing them as a systematic part of the ways in which their family, their “culture,” and changing material and social conditions script gender roles and women’s lives, or without feeling that they must contest them in more formal, public, and political ways (1997: 11).

While the gender inequality and dynamics within Hindu-Tamil practices are intensely visible, they often remain unquestioned. For instance, Hindu wives are required by custom to bear multiple visible markers of their marital status in the form of: a thaali around her neck, kumkum on her forehead, bangles on her wrists, rings on her toes and preferably but not forcibly in many cases, a sari. These markings are intended to ‘protect’ the female from outside male attention. Notably, there isn’t an equivalent set of markings prescribed for the married male. These markings are part of a wider network of methods enforced to discipline and control the brown female body.

Karuvil: Part Two

My contestation of the many issues around gender inequality through ***Karuvil: Part One*** led me into the conceptualisation of ***Karuvil: Part Two***, my medium project. My interrogation focused on puberty rites and rituals in relation to the Hindu-Tamil girl child. One of the most significant rites of passages for the girl child is her puberty ceremony.

Installed and performed at Youngblood gallery, this project combined aspects of a restaged puberty ceremony and the relationship between food, prayer, yoni (vagina) and the Tamil Hindu community of Durban. After their very first menstrual cycle, a puberty ceremony is held after a range of rituals are performed for a Tamil-Hindu girl. It is assumed that the young girl is a virgin and her hair rests in a long plait as she is dressed as a bride. Puberty ceremonies are a celebration of a daughters coming of age, but began as an advertisement within villages of daughters who are now suitable for marriage. Thus, daughters are dressed as young brides, gifted with clothes and jewellery, and fed specific food to strengthen her body. It should be noted that there is no such coming of age ceremony held for Tamil-Hindu males. The problematic aspect of this ceremonial and traditional practice is in the overt sexualisation of the girl child.

Beginning very early in life, the girl child is subjected to play the dutiful daughter, the responsible sister, the good cousin, niece, granddaughter and further, following the natural course of events, the beloved wife, respectful daughter-in-law, the all nurturing mother. Initiated into behaving according to a strictly prescribed set of norms and dress codes, the girl child quickly realizes that her acceptability as a woman will depend, to a large extent, on how much selflessness and restraint she can display when confronted with adversity [...]. She, like her mother is expected to have a concessional attitude towards the irrational demands or behaviours of the male members of her family. Although such strictures may be more emphatically emphasized in some social strata and less than others, it would be safe to say that the girl child is very quickly given to understand the restricted parameters within which her behaviour and attitude is deemed acceptable as 'normal' and 'decent' (2002: 167).

The girl child is inscribed into roles that are determined decent by her family and society, with little to no opportunity to voice or self express; female individualism is seen as threatening and disruptive of family honour. I position two practices of the Tamil-Hindu community of South Africa next to each other; with ***Karuvil: Part One*** looking at the exclusion of menstruating women from sacred spaces, and ***Karuvil: Part Two*** exploring the overtly sexualised practice of puberty ceremonies for Tamil-Hindu girls.

Illustration 5 (right): *Karuvil: Part Two*.

Youngblood Gallery (Upstairs), Bree Street, Cape Town. ICA Live Art Festival 2017.

Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Dean Hutton.

In *Karuvil: Part Two*, the performer interacted with the audience by handing out sweetmeats in the shape of a yoni (vagina) and business cards from a tray placed between the thighs. The business cards were of screen shot images of social media posts from around the globe capturing thoughts about menstruation. “Women are taught in many ways that our bodies are what make life in this world dangerous for us” (Hubbard, in O’Neill, 1990:13), which is an intrinsic and recurrent image in my work.

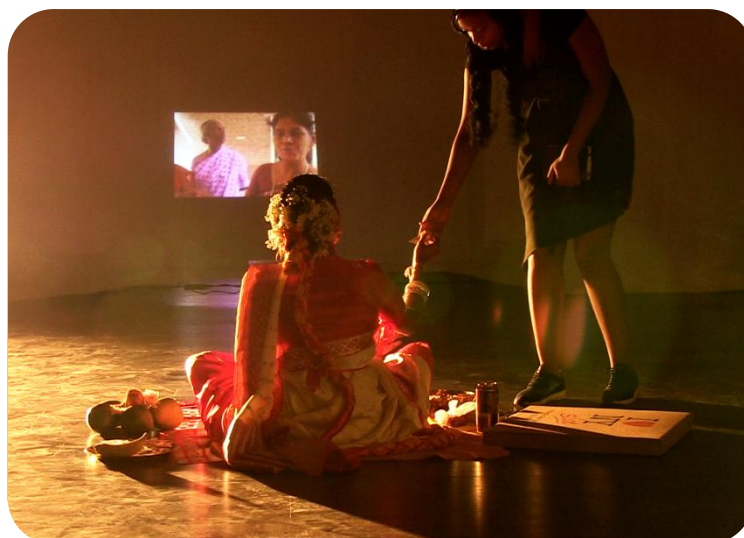


Illustration 6 (above): *Karuvil: Part Two. Youngblood Gallery (Upstairs), Bree Street, Cape Town. ICA Live Art Festival 2017.*

Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Dean Hutton.

As part of my 4th year directing exam at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I designed and directed *Venus* (1996) by Suzan-Lori Parks, an absurdist exploration into the effects of the objectification of the black female body in relation to colonialism through the plight and story of Sarah Baartman. Baartman’s inability to control how she (her body) was perceived is something I identify within my own work through placing the brown female as an installed object, positioning this body as a site for violence, codification and silence.

Performative installation art provided the opportunity to experiment with ‘performing an Indian woman/girl’ which actively engages the public gaze. The two dimensionality of installation art engages with exhibitionism of the black and brown female body, a kind of Baartmanisation¹¹ of the South African Indian body as a site for violence. Butler (1990) notes that “the body” appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself. In either case, the body is figured as a mere instrument or medium for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. But “the body” is itself a construction, as are the myriad “bodies” that constitute the domain of gendered subjects (1990: 12-13).

The celebration of a Tamil girls’ ‘coming of age’ is exhibited to an audience as she watches three interconnected video clips in relation to the brown female body. Intentionally provocative, the videos point toward the absurd demands placed on this body beginning with the correct diet and procedure upon the first menstruation; an Indian advert for vaginal “hygiene” lightening cream and a ‘B-Grade Bollywood rape scene’ in which consent and rape is blurred and romanticised. “Performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate “act,” but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler, 1993:2) with each Indian female passing down ways of being and performing as an ‘Indian woman’ on to the next. The expectations of how and when an Indian female can occupy a particular space is introduced in the minor project, ***Karuvil: Part One***. This concept is taken further in line with the expectations of how an Indian female *should* perform and adjust her behavioural patterns in the medium project, ***Karuvil: Part Two***.

Self-censorship and self-policing become embedded in the performing of an Indian woman; the adorned brown female body is safely presented as the sitting, the meek, the submissive, the silent and the passive; speaking directly to the performance of gender and the training in how to present as non-threatening and somewhat complicit in cushioning patriarchy.

¹¹ **Baartmanisation**- An informal term used by Simphiwe Dana in reference to Sarah Baartman, whose story influenced much of my own feminist thought and practise in relation to the black/brown female body in performance spaces.

Intermittent Sacrality

Vijaya Rettakudi Nagarajan (2001: 160) introduces a self coined expression to help describe, analyse and understand some of the contradictions between the conceptual and pragmatic levels of Hinduism; the expression is called '*intermittent sacrality*'.

Hindus view the Ganges as sacred and worship the river. Yet, at the same time, the prevalent lack of care and protectiveness towards the Ganges in everyday practice within popular Hinduism is also clear. Natural objects are shot through with the notions of sacrality embedded within and through them. Sacrality is both a force and substance. It moves around; it has volition; it is characterized by ritual hospitality. Sometimes the object itself, whether natural or human, previously not sacred, becomes sacred during a specific time period. (Nagarajan, 2001: 160)

The sacred object in this case, the Tamil girl child, becomes the object of performance within the framework of live art. ***Karuvil Part One & Two*** had both embodied the expression of 'intermittent sacrality' in which the performer is gazed upon as a passive and silent body in a somewhat sacred space.

Indian women are inscribed into stereotypical and mythical roles which are revered within Hinduism and are a prevalent expectation for what determines the ideal Hindu woman. In her unpacking of the Tamil Women's ritual of making Kolams¹² Nagarajan notes that "four goddesses constantly circulate in the women's kolam narratives: they are Bhumadevi, the earth goddess, Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, good fortune, prosperity, and rice, Mudevi¹³, the goddess of laziness, sleepiness and poverty, and Tulsi Devi, the goddess of Indian basil. (Lakshmi and Mudevi and a pair of natural opposites, laziness and sleepiness as opposed to activeness, poverty to wealth, ill-luck to good fortune, an empty bowl to an overflowing bowl of rice; the two opposing goddesses are at war with each other and cannot be in the same room" (2001: 167-8). It is obvious that Hindu women seek and strive to resemble the qualities of Lakshmi in order to embody the concepts of an ideal Hindu woman and wife.

When we begin to contest these roles by presenting the female body as abused, as a site for violence and overt sexualisation, as an object of the male gaze, and as a site for trauma; we begin to contest the "sacrality" within Hinduism that is attached to being female. There begins a de-codifying and truth telling of the tensions of being born into Hinduism and

¹² **Kolam**- An offering to the Earth Goddess, Bhuma Devi, Tamil women create a pattern on the ground using mielie (rice/ powder). A Kolam is always at the entrance of the home or any ceremonial space.

¹³ **Mudevi**- A Hindu goddesses, 'Mudevi' is also a colloquial term used within the South African Tamil (but not limited to) community to describe a woman who is seen as lazy, unfeminine, unrefined or sloppily dressed. It is a term loaded with every opposite to what the ideal Hindu woman should be.

discovering the feminist self. My own upbringing did not outwardly instruct or encourage feminist thought and practice, but rather the observations of my mother being oppressed by my grandmother; the last rites of my father who had two daughters were given to his nephew (who acted as a son) instead of me- these were a few of the painful and inexplicable tensions between my faith, patriarchal tradition, and the feminist self.

In her elaboration of 'intermittent sacrality,' Nagarajan (2001) elaborates that "if the perception of natural objects are steeped through with notions of sacrality, will that not naturally lead to a heightened sense of protection and care of that natural object?" (2001: 172). In the context of my performative work, the natural object steeped with sacrality is the brown female body. While her existence within her cultural and religious sphere is perceived to be a safe space for the female, the gender inequality and violent practices of control over female bodies is exhaustive. Violence against women is not new to women of the third world. It has almost become a customary part of how women negotiate their bodies on an everyday basis.

Grappling with Mother-Culture practices

Passivity and silence translate my own rigorous training in the performance of the "Indian woman." Schechner (2002) notes, "everyday life also involves years of training and practice, of learning appropriate culturally specific bits of behaviour. Of adjusting and performing one's life roles in relation to social and personal circumstances. The long infancy and childhood specific to the human species is an extended period of training and rehearsal for the successful performance of adult life" (2002: 22-23). Much of my practice towards this research has highlighted themes and patterns in my work that present as codified behaviour. Schechner (2002) defines codified acting as "performing according to a semiotically constructed score of movement, gestures, songs, costumes, and makeup. This score is rooted in tradition and passed down from teachers to students by means of rigorous training" (2002: 183) which thematically reflects in my work.

"The practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production" and a continuous one (1993: 231). ***Karuvil: Part One and Two*** experiments with the body as an adorned and sacred object in a transitional and liminal space. Schechner (2002) notes the following on rituals in performance:

Rituals are collective memories encoded into actions. Rituals also help people (and animals) deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies, and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life. Play gives people a chance to temporarily experience the taboo, the excessive, and the risk. [...] Ritual and play lead people into a “second reality” separate from ordinary life. This reality is one where people can become selves other than their daily selves. When they temporarily become or enact another, people perform actions different from what they do ordinarily. Thus, ritual and play transform people, either permanently or temporarily. Rituals that transform people permanently are called “rites of passage” (2002: 52).

It is this transformation between ritual, memory, and performance as suggested by Schechner (2002) which I have attempted to articulate through a Hindu feminist lens. The sacrality of the Hindu female and the pressure to conform to the ideals characterised in various female goddesses within Hinduism is a space of contradiction and contestation. Simultaneously empowering and ambiguous, the relationship between Hindu female deities resembles the relationship to ones mother, and by extension the ‘motherland’.

...for many of us, women in different parts of the world, our relationships to our mothers resemble our relationships to the motherlands of the cultures in which we were raised. Both our mothers and our mother-cultures give us all sorts of contradictory messages, encouraging their daughters to be confident, impudent, and self-assertive even as they attempt to instill conformity, decorum, and silence, seemingly oblivious to these contradictions”(Narayan, 1997: 8).

This concept of ‘mother-culture practices’ (Narayan, 1997) is germane toward understanding the built in complexities and contradictions of being an Indian (Hindu) feminist. While a feminist tradition of wanting better for daughters by educating and encouraging their self sufficiency surfaces, this independence is often restricted, limited and policed. Many modern Hindu mothers encourage their daughters towards independence, simultaneously policing this ‘independence’ in keeping with the upholding of cultural values and tradition. The Indian female is seen as the bearer of family honour and the preserver of cultural purity, connecting the feminine through mother-culture behaviour to the ‘motherland’. Narayan (1997) notes that mother-culture practices:

inspire the same sort of complicated emotional responses from their feminist daughters- love and fear, the desire to repudiate and the desire to understand and be understood, a sense of deep connection and a desperate desire for distance. Acquiring one’s own “take” or perspective on one’s mother-culture seems no less vital and inevitable than developing one’s own sense of one’s mother, perspectives where love and loyalty coexist, uneasily and painfully, with criticism. And no matter how far from them we move, we carry with us the shapes of their influence in much of what we do, even in our contestations and reworkings of the very lessons they taught us. Those who perceive our feminism as merely a symptom of our “Westernization,” or accuse us of lack of “respect” for “our cultures,” fail to see how complicated are an individual’s relationships to powerful influences that shape both their conformities and their conflicts, fail to see the closeness between us and the contexts in which we have become both daughters and feminists” (1997: 10).

The mechanics of shame

“You want to understand how power works in any society, watch who is carrying the shame and who is doing the shaming” (Patel in Gqola, 2015: 38). In developing a performance language that transgresses, transcends, and disrupts the boundaries of social and cultural spaces, one of the imperative struggles was the brown female finding ways to voice. There is a culture of silence that is produced through the concept of shame as it is constructed and used to discipline, control and punish the brown female through which a sense of self policing and self surveying is enforced and taught within Indian culture. As Foucault (1977) notes and “With specific relation to Indian Hindu females, Maheshvari Naidu (2011) proposes that:

religiously connoted constructions within Hindusim [...] panoptically essentialise and mark women as child producing mothers, and are blind to the maternal objectification that strips other aspects of corporeality off the female body. Women are religiously ‘disciplined’ into having to biologically and socially fulfil a religiously authorized maternal role. There is thus a religiously sanctioned performance of discursive ‘othering’ or alterity that comes to be normalized (2011:1)

The religious disciplining (Naidu, 2011) and ‘making’ (Foucault, 1977) of the Indian Hindu female through maternally inscribed roles, there effectively begins the production of docile female bodies. The passive, quiet, unassuming, compliant, tame, obedient, meek brown female is an image explored in ***Karuvil Part One and Two***. In an effort toward challenging the brown female body as docile, I approached the methodology of comedy as a transgressive medium through which the brown female could speak. Notably though, the comedic structure of ***How NOT to ask for IT and other tips*** expresses the brown female articulating fear and frustration through passive aggression. Comedy directly masks the inner most anxieties and fears under the guise of humour which was intricately explored as one of my most successful works towards articulating my trajectory. Silence is replaced with humour and expressions of aggression which break the stereotypical associations of the brown female body.

...most of women’s silences are coerced: ‘the resounding silence of women is more often a tragic silence’ (p. 106), ‘[a] silence of denial’ (p.107). Adrienne Rich (1978:18) has named some of the tragic and destructive forms of silencing that women experience: ‘namelessness, denial, secrets, taboo subjects, erasure, false-naming, non-naming, encoding, omission, veiling, fragmentation and lying’. Silencing is used to isolate people disempowered by their gender, race, and class, even in the speaking contexts of their daily lives (1991:388).

The mechanics of shame work towards keeping the voiceless and invisible hopeless and docile. According to Gqola (2015), “shame is a function of oppression; it has everything to do with who is valued and who is invisibilised in any society. [...] Shame is the product of dehumanisation, and all systems of violent oppressive power produce shame in those they brutalise” (2015, 38). In speaking about violence and trauma in relation to the brown female body, there begins a process of catharsis and healing. Gqola (2015) asserts that “patriarchy creates an inferiority complex in women that also depends on the hatred for the feminine and therefore self-loathing” (2015: 39).

Questions for Amma

In the final thesis production for this research, I aim to combine the methodology of comedy and ritual through two performers, a natural pair of opposites confronting each other in a liminal space. This work will trace the expressions of aggression and violence through the brown female body, unpacking its manifestations in performance. Rehearsals will include improvisation around movement and with text, documenting how the bodies respond to each other. I will map out a clear structure of movement and text for the staging of this final thesis production, in keeping with the traditions of theatre. However, I wish to create moments of spontaneity in which the performers interact with the audience directly.

As my practice is through a feminist lens, collaboration between performers provides equal space to develop work that voices the experience of the brown female body. This work will draw from the strongest proven performance methodology within this research being comedy. It will challenge the conventions of comedy in Indian theatre by attempting to drive the subversion and re-representation of brown female identity; continuing to dismantle and shatter illusions and stereotypes from within. Comedic scripting will allow the performer to connect with the audience directly. The rehearsal process includes the performers documentation on ways in which we self pacify, self discipline, self police and self survey according the space in which our bodies move through. Drawing from this, the performance seeks to explore the inner workings of violence, aggression and oppression, de-sacralising the Indian female by subverting representations and exploring the negotiations of women’s bodies as being “accessible for consumption” (Gqola, 2015: 73) in culture, tradition and society.

Conclusion

This research has investigated performance as a medium through which the brown female body begins to speak. Performance has proven to be a transgressive medium through which the brown female is able to subvert and shatter the illusionary and gender stereotypical representations of South African Indian female. Through the theory unpacked in this research together with the supporting case studies, the staging of my final thesis production seeks to challenge cycles of oppression within the Indian community and society; focusing on how female fear and shame is manufactured to maintain patriarchy.

Furthermore, this research locates an evident feminist tradition in the lives of South African Indian women beyond western ideology and scholarship. Methods of resistance are present even though females have been conditioned into passivity and silence. “As long as a woman cannot speak, as long as those to whom she speaks do not listen, the violence is unending” (Kandasamy, 2017: 197).

The goal of this research has been to break the silence and to create an awareness of abusive and oppressive cycles embedded within the ‘personal’ and ‘private’ spheres. Re-representation and self representation is crucial to tearing the fabric of patriarchy that perpetuates the silence. Silence is intimately connected to the workings of shame, honour and dishonour which tend to suppress females through a patriarchal lens. It is through performance- using the body as a medium to speak - that we begin to create an awareness of learned behaviour, examining the ways in which we may unlearn. As bell hooks (1989) asserts, “that aspect of feminist revolution that calls women to love womanness, that calls men to resist dehumanizing concepts of masculinity, is an essential part of our struggle. It is the process by which we move from seeing ourselves as objects to acting as subjects (1989: 26-27). Through this research, I have articulated the potential for theatre and performance to function as a means for self representation and self expression and a weapon of liberation and healing, presenting my theatrical approaches towards creating a performance language which disrupts illusions and stereotypes associated with the brown female body towards a truth telling.

List of Illustrations

Illustration 1: *How NOT to ask for IT and Other tips.* Arena Theatre. University of Cape Town. 2017. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Kate Jaskolski.....**Page 24**

Illustration 2: *How NOT to ask for IT and Other tips.* Arena Theatre. University of Cape Town. 2017. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Kate Jaskolski.....**Page 24**

Illustration 3: *Karuvil: Part One.* Bindery Dressing Room. University of Cape Town. 2016. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Kate Jaskolski.....**Page 29**

Illustration 4: *Karuvil: Part One.* Bindery Dressing Room. University of Cape Town. 2016. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Kate Jaskolski.....**Page 30**

Illustration 5: *Karuvil: Part Two.* Youngblood Gallery, Bree Street, Cape Town. 2017. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Dean Hutton.....**Page 33**

Illustration 6: *Karuvil: Part Two.* Youngblood Gallery, Bree Street, Cape Town. 2017. Performer: Kivithra Naicker. Photo by Dean Hutton.....**Page 33**

List of References

1. Aldama J. Arturo. 2003. Violence and the Body: Race, Gender, and the State. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
2. Alsop, C. 2002. Home and Away: Self-Reflexive Auto-/Ethnography. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*.
3. Anzari, A & Young, A. 2015. Master of None: Indians on TV [online video] 2015, November 6. USA. Netflix. Available at: <https://www.netflix.com/title/80049714>
4. Barrett, E. Bolt, B. Eds. 2007. Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry. I. B. Taurus.
5. Butler, J. 1990. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of identity. UK: Routledge.
6. Butler, J. 1993. Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex". Oxon: Routledge
7. Conquergood, D. 2003. Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research. In Bial, H. (ed.) *The Performance Studies Reader*: New York: Routledge.
8. Desai, A & Vahed, G. 2010. Inside an Indian Indenture. Cape Town : HSRC Press.
9. Ensler, E & Steinem, G. 2001. The Vagina Monologues. New York: Villard.
10. Fanon, F. 1986. Black Skin, White Masks. United Kingdom: Pluto Press.
11. Foucault, M. 1977. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. New York: Vintage Books.
12. Freund, B. 1991. Indian Women and the Changing Character of the Work class Indian Household in Natal 1860-1990. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 17:3, 414-429. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2637192>
13. Govender, K. 1998. Women in Brown. Unpublished play text. [Course Manual] Department of Drama & Performance Studies, University of KwaZulu- Natal.
14. Govender, K. 2001. Subverting Identity after 1994: The South African Indian Woman as Playwright. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity. Culture: Transgressing Boundaries*, 49, 33-43. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4066490>
15. Govender, S. 1994. Interculturalism and South African Indian Fusion Dance. Available: <http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/ARTS/dance/SURIA.htm>
16. Gopal, N. Khan, S & Singh, S. 2014. India and its Diaspora: making sense of Hindu identity in South Africa. *Diaspora Studies*. 7:1, 28-41. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2013.871890>
17. Gqola, P. 2015. RAPE: A South African Nightmare. South Africa: Jacana Media.
18. Hanson, T. 2000. Plays, Politics and Cultural Identity among Indians in Durban. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 26:2, 255-269. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2637493>
19. hooks, b. 1989. Talking Back- thinking feminist, thinking black. Boston, MA: South End Press.
20. hooks, b. 1990. Yearning- race, gender, and cultural politics. Boston, MA: South End Press.

21. Houston, M. & Kramarae, C. 1991. Speaking from silence: methods of silencing and of resistance. *Discourse & Society, SPECIAL ISSUE: Women Speaking from Silence*. 2.4.
22. Heddon, D. 2008. Autobiography and Performance. USA: Palgrave MacMillan.
23. Ingold, T. 2000. The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill. London and New York: Routledge.
24. Kandasamy, M. 2010. Ms Militancy. New Delhi: Navayana Press.
25. Kandasamy, M. 2017. When I Hit You: Or Portrait of the Writer as a Young wife. Great Britain: Atlantic Books.
26. Moodley, S. 2008. Telling the Stories of South African Hindu Women: Participatory Video as a Methodological Tool for Feminist Research. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity, Community Media*. 77, 116-125. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27739445>
27. Mutu, W. Wangechi Mutu: Adult Female Sexual Organs.
Available:http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/wangechi_mutu_adult_female.htm
28. Nagarajan, V.R. 2001. Sacred Custodians of the Earth? : Women, Spirituality, and the Environment. ed. Alaine Low & Soraya Tremayne. New York & Oxford : Berghahn Books.
29. Naicker, K. 2016. *Karuvil: Part One*. Installation/Exhibition. Bindery dressing room, University of Cape Town.
30. Naicker, K. 2017. *Karuvil: Part Two*. Installation. Youngblood Galley (upstairs), Bree Street, Cape Town.
31. Naicker, K. 2017. *How NOT to ask for it and other tips*. Arena Theatre, University of Cape Town
32. Naicker, T. 2017. Lets talk with AUNTY Sheila [Facebook Page] Available: <https://www.facebook.com/Lets-talk-with-AUNTY-Sheila-131913160638765/>
33. Naidoo, M. 1993. The Search for Cultural Identity: a personal odyssey. Available: <http://www.muthalnaidoo.co.za/theatre-othermenu-120/60-indian-theatre-in-durban>
34. Naidu, M. 2011. Queering Women and Hinduism: Disembedding the Maternal Script from Woman and Earth. *Journal for the Study of Religion*. 24:2,33-46. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24764283>
35. Naidu, M. 2011. Indian women in marriage: when the scared marriage thread becomes a noose, *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, 25:1, 84-92. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2011.575587>
36. Narayan, U. 1997. Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third-World Feminism. New York: Routledge.

37. O'Neill, K. 1990. Women's Bodies as Battlegrounds: An Interview with Ruth Hubbard. *Woman of Power*. Fall.18.(10-14).
38. Parks, S. 1997. Venus. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
39. Pena, G. 2005. Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism and Pedagogy. New York: Routledge.
40. Peacock, S. 2003. Violence and the Body: Race, Gender, and the State ed. Arturo J. Aldama. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. (363-364).
41. Radhakrishnan, S. 2003. "African Dream" : The Imaginary of Nation, Race, and Gender in South African Intercultural Dance. *Feminist Studies, Women in Democratic South Africa*. 26.3, 529-537. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178715>
42. Reed-Danahay, Deborah E. 1997. Auto/Ethnography. Rewriting the self and the social. New York: Berg
43. Richardson, Laurel (2001). Writing. A method of inquiry. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd edition) (pp.923-948). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
44. Schechner, R. 1990. Magnitudes of Performance. By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual. ed. Schechner, R. and Appel, W. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 19-49
45. Schechner, R. 2002. Performance Studies: An Introduction. Oxon, USA & Canada: Routledge.
46. Sooklal, 1991. International Journal on World Peace. 8:2, 81-86. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20751686>
47. Subramanyam, L. 2002. Muffled Voices: Women in Modern Indian Theatre. New Delhi: Haranand Publications.
48. Swadener, B. B., & Mutua, K. (2008). Decolonizing performances: Deconstructing the global postcolonial. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.) *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. (31-44). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
49. Sugirtharajah, S. 2002. Hinduism and Feminism: Some Concerns. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. 18: 2, 97 – 104. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002442>
50. Umebinyuo, I. 2017. Dismantling the Culture of Silence [online video] 2017, June 13. USA. TEDX Talk. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyZsPUnPGj0>
51. Umebinyuo, I. 2016. Questions for Ada. South Carolina: CreateSpace.