

## **Introduction: South Africa-India: Towards Close Scholarly Ties**

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The idea for this volume emerged from a colloquium “The Bonfire of 1908: Passive Resistance Then and Now” hosted by the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa (CISA) at the University of the Witwatersrand on 18 August 2008. The colloquium formed part of a broader set of events to commemorate the centenary of the burning of registration documents which marked an important phase in Gandhi’s satyagraha campaign. Along with CISA, these events were organised by the Indian High Commission and Gandhi Centenary Committee and included a film festival, a school’s essay competition and a walk from MuseuMAfricA to the Hamidia Mosque in Newtown, Johannesburg, the site of the original bonfire of 1908. Several hundred people in specially designed T-shirts participated in the walk and then gathered to hear representatives of families who had links to the satyagraha campaign as well as political dignitaries from India and South Africa speak. Thereafter there was a reenactment of the burning of passes with participants throwing replicas of the original registration documents into a fire in a cauldron. The colloquium itself also included a lecture by Kader Asmal at the Constitutional Court on the topic “Passive Resistance: Then and Now”.

The first section of this special edition entitled “Gandhi and Indian Nationalism in South Africa” comprises papers drawn from the colloquium. The second section “Comparative Possibilities” does not arise directly from the colloquium; it contains papers from two prominent Indian intellectuals. These were solicited by co-editor Raymond Suttner, an academic with an extensive network of academic colleagues in India. A final section “Connecting Public Histories” revisits an important but little-known monument in Observatory, Johannesburg to Indian auxiliaries in the Anglo-Boer War/South African War.

These papers are drawn together under the rubric “South Africa-India: Towards Closer Scholarly Ties” and are intended as a contribution to the fast-expanding scholarship that is exploring the connections and comparisons between South Africa and India. This introduction surveys this historiography and then discusses how the papers in this special issue extend this body of work.

### **South Africa-India: Connecting Histories**

South Africa and India make a compelling partnership in terms of their long-standing connections and similarities of historical experience which invite a comparative approach. United first through slavery (one-quarter of slaves at the Cape were from South Asia) and then indenture, South Africa and India have long-standing ties. While official ties were ruptured by segregation and apartheid, other links, notably between the Indian National Congress and the African National Congress, were strengthened. Post-1994, official ties were rapidly and enthusiastically resumed.

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Since that date, the interactions between South Africa and India have intensified dramatically. The economic indicators are most stark. Trade relations between the two countries were effectively non-existent before 1994, but today total trade amounts to over US\$ 4 billion. Since 2001, it has grown at a rate of 22 per cent per annum, and the two governments have set a target of US\$ 10 billion by 2010. Around forty major corporations from each country now operate in the other, including many familiar corporate names: Tata, Ranbaxy, Bajaj, ICICI, Anglo American, Sasol, Sanlam and Shoprite. Others such as Infosys and Standard Bank are known to be evaluating possible entry.<sup>1</sup> The growth in commercial ties has seen the establishment of bilateral business associations and similar bodies, but has also stimulated the expansion of linkages in other social arenas beyond the market.

The countries share many features. Both laboured under British colonial rule and evolved rich histories of anti-colonial struggle. The struggles of the two regions were intertwined: firstly through the figure of Gandhi and secondly through the mutually shaping influence of Indian and African nationalisms.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of contemporary similarities, both countries are middle-ranked powers in the South. The extreme diversity in terms of language, culture and religion of both regions presents similar opportunities and challenges: for example, debates on affirmative action are cognate across the two regions. Both countries have rising middle classes with their concomitant contradictions, namely older high-minded political ideas encountering new modes of consumerism.

The meanings and implications of these interactions and comparisons have not as yet been fully explored in the academy. Until recently, the obstacles to such a project were considerable. Apartheid was self-evidently a major impediment and prevented the free exchange of ideas and academics. A Cold War Area Studies map which divides the world into regions of discrete analysis continues to separate the study of South Asia from that of Africa. Similarly, national frameworks of analysis obscure the transnational movements and flows which have united the two regions. While there is an impressive body of scholarship on South African Indian history, this work necessarily has limitations. As Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie has pointed out, this scholarship manifests a one-way problem, namely that it focuses almost exclusively on the movement of people and goods from India to Africa. There is very little work that tracks reverse movements of Africans to India or asks what the implications of indentured diasporic movements are for the mainland.<sup>3</sup> There is a body of work on Siddis, communities descended from African slaves, soldiers, traders, clerics, bodyguards and sailors from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>4</sup> While this work is

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1 These figures have been supplied by Stephen Gelb of the EDGE Institute and formerly Acting Director of the Centre of Indian Studies in Africa. They were extracted from internal university documents on the CISA.

2 P. Raman, "Yusuf Dadoo: Transnational Politics, South African Belonging", *South African Historical Journal*, 50, 2004, pp 27-48 and J. Soske, "Navigating Difference: Gender, Miscegenation, and Indian Domestic Space in 20th Century Natal", in P. Gupta, I. Hofmeyr and M. Pearson (eds), *Eyes Across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean* (UNISA Press and Penguin India, Pretoria and Delhi, forthcoming).

3 U. Dhupelia-Mesthrie, "The Place of Indian in South African History: Academic Scholarship, Past, Present and Future", *South African Historical Journal*, 57, 2007, pp 12-34.

4 S. de S. Jayasuriya and R. Pankhurst (eds), *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean* (Africa World Press, Trenton, 2003).

certainly important, it is often taken as the only evidence of African movement to India. More recent flows of students, intellectuals and exiles await serious investigation.

With regard to the meanings of diasporic formations for the mainland, the picture is starting to change. Post-1960s migration, particularly to the north, has attracted a lot of scholarship probably because such diasporas were more middle class than the nineteenth-century indentured migrations. The ways in which such diasporic movements shape developments back in India, particularly as regards recent diasporic support for Hindu nationalism, have been investigated. By contrast, the less glamorous indentured diasporas and their relationship to nationalism in India have attracted much less attention. Instead, as Dhupelia-Mesthrie notes, these flows of labour are studied only for the impact they have outside of India.<sup>5</sup> Two signal exceptions are Tejaswini Niranjana and John Kelly who have examined the ways in which debate in and about the indentured diaspora shaped notions of Indian nationalism.<sup>6</sup>

Another problem with the scholarship on South African Indians is that it tends to be characterised by historiographies of extremity: there is an emphasis on either too much solidarity between Africans and Indians who are portrayed shoulder to shoulder in the struggle or too little with a strong emphasis on Africans and Indians in conflict.<sup>7</sup> In other instances, there is a tendency to sequester the study of South African Indians from other groups so that they appear removed from the mainstream of South African history. As Devarakshanam Govinden demonstrates, discussions of South African literature seldom take account of South African Indian traditions of writing which are corralled into a separate analytical space.<sup>8</sup>

Fortunately the circumstances producing these limitations are rapidly being eroded. The 1994 political transition in South Africa has enabled an energetic exchange of people and ideas between South Africa and India. Several academics in South Africa have seized these opportunities and there is now a small but growing body of work that is charting out different trajectories of South Africa-India histories. A recent edition of the *South African Historical Journal* was devoted to the theme "South Africa-India: Re-imagining the Disciplines"; a special issue of the *South African Journal of International Affairs* covers the theme "India in Africa"; a special edition of the *Journal of Asian and African Studies* is given over to a discussion of "South Africa-India: Connections and Comparisons".<sup>9</sup> A recent French, Indian and South African research project resulted in a book *Reconfiguring Identities*

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5 Dhupelia-Mesthrie, "The Place of Indian"

6 T Niranjana, "Left to the Imagination: Indian Nationalism and Female Sexuality in Trinidad", *Public Culture*, 11, 1, 1999, pp 223-243 and J Kelly, *A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999)

7 For an example of the former see V Gupta (ed), *Dhanyavaad: a Tribute to the Heroes and Heroines of India who Supported the Liberation Struggle of South Africa* (The High Commission of the Republic of South Africa in India [New Delhi], New Delhi, n d); for examples of the latter, see the controversy around Mbongeni Ngema's 2002 song "Amaindiya"

8 D Govinden, *Sister Outsiders: The Representation and Difference in Selected Writings by South African Indian Women* (UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2008)

9 *South African Historical Journal*, 57, 2007; *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 14, 2, 2007; *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1-2, 2009

and *Building Territories in India and South Africa*.<sup>10</sup> In the arena of cultural studies, a special edition of *scrutiny2* explored the theme of “Culture and Circulation in the Indian Ocean”.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, the transnational turn in the academy has promoted a new set of methodologies for studying global flows of ideas, commodities and circuits which can be adapted to studying the interactions between southern Africa and India. These trends are becoming apparent in work which examines the flows of Bollywood in and out of South Africa.<sup>12</sup> A body of work on Goan migration around the Indian Ocean reveals the ways such movement throws into question categories of race, nation and empire.<sup>13</sup> Analyses of Indian Ocean seafaring and sailors have also become important.<sup>14</sup>

Transnational approaches have also prompted a body of work which reverses the one-way flow of only examining movements from India to Africa. Examples include P.K. Datta’s work on political meanings of the Anglo-Boer War in India and work on the representation of Africa in the Indian periodical press.<sup>15</sup>

This interest in transnational history has promoted a re-emergence of oceanic studies which in turn has made studies of the Indian Ocean more visible.<sup>16</sup> Studies of the Indian Ocean world in turn hold out new approaches and methods for tracking connected histories between South Africa and India. One example of this approach is influential work by Tim Harper and Mark Ravinder Frost, which argues for the idea of an Indian Ocean public sphere rooted in the imperial port cities of the littoral.<sup>17</sup> United by shared intellectual, religious and social reform projects, the diasporic intelligentsias of these port cities sustained networks of media from the 1880s to the First World War that brought into being publics rooted in and across the Indian

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10 P Gervais-Lambony, F Landy and S Oldfield (eds), *Reconfiguring Identities and Building Territories in India and South Africa* (Manohar and Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi, 2005)

11 *scrutiny2*, 13, 2, 2008

12 H Ebrahim, “From ‘Ghetto’ to Mainstream: Bollywood in South Africa”, *scrutiny2*, 13, 2, 2008, pp 191-204

13 P Gupta, “Mapping Portuguese Decolonisation in the Indian Ocean: a Research Agenda” and R Pinto, “Race and Imperial Loss: Accounts of East Africa in Goa”, both in *South African Historical Journal*, 57, 2007, pp 93-112 and pp 82-92

14 J J Ewald, “Crossers of the Sea: Slaves, Freedmen, and Other Migrants in the Northwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1914”, *The American Historical Review*, February 2000, accessed on 25 February 2009 at <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/105.1/ah000069.html>; J Hyslop, “Steamship Empire: Asian, African and British Sailors in the Merchant Marine c. 1880–1945”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1-2, 2009, pp 49-67

15 P K Datta, “The Interlocking Worlds of the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa/India” and I Hofmeyr, “The Idea of ‘Africa’ in Indian Nationalism: Reporting the Diaspora in *The Modern Review* 1907-1929”, both in *South African Historical Journal*, 57, 2007, pp 35-59 and pp 60-81

16 S Bose, *One Hundred Horizons: the Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 2006); M Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (Routledge, London, 2003) and E Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility in the Indian Ocean* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006)

17 T N Harper, “Empire, Diaspora and the Languages of Globalism, 1850-1914”, in A G Hopkins (ed), *Globalization in World History* (Pimlico, London, 2002), pp 141-166; M R Frost, “‘Wider Opportunities’: Religious Revival, Nationalist Awakening and the Global Dimension in Colombo, 1870-1920”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 36, 4, 2002, pp 937-967

Ocean. A project on the Indian Ocean run between CISA, Jamia Millia Islamia University in Delhi and Roskilde University in Denmark recently explored these ideas in a conference entitled “Print Cultures, Nationalisms and Publics of the Indian Ocean”.<sup>18</sup>

The transnational turn in the humanities and social sciences has also enabled a deeper consideration of the mutually shaping influences of African and Indian nationalisms on each other. In important new works, Jon Soske has started to probe the relations of both conflict and co-operation that shaped the interaction of Indian and African nationalism in Natal.<sup>19</sup> Looking at East Africa, Robert Muponde has raised important insights in his analysis of Ngugi’s depictions of Gandhi, demonstrating how the dismissive portrayal of the Mahatma shows up the masculinist underpinnings of African nationalism.<sup>20</sup>

With regard to comparative research on South Africa and India, a small but growing body of work is starting to explore various pathways. Crain Soudien has undertaken a decade-long study comparing inclusion and exclusion in Indian and South African schools. The thrust of the project is to understand how normative inclusion produces exclusion. The study highlights the hegemonic power of Anglo and middle-class values as a site of assimilation in South Africa, while examining the invisible power of upper casteism in Indian schools despite decades of ongoing affirmative action.<sup>21</sup>

Another direction has been comparative labour history. Phil Bonner has explored differences between the historiographies on migrancy in the two countries. In the South African historiography, migrancy is treated as synonymous with institutionalised compulsion and coercion. India has large-scale migrancy but without this barrage of coercive interventions. The work also compares questions of generation, gender, race and social stability across the two historiographies that show up their aporias in productive ways.<sup>22</sup> Sumit Sarkar has compared Indian and South African traditions of labour history, while Peter Alexander has examined aspects of coal mining in both countries.<sup>23</sup>

Yet another avenue of comparative work pertains to social movements and participatory democracy in the two regions. Michelle Williams’ work compares the ideological visions of the Communist Parties in South Africa and Kerala, India. Patrick Heller contrasts democratic consolidation and democratic deepening in the two regions.<sup>24</sup> Another example of comparative scholarship is Claire Benit-Gbaffou’s

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18 [http://www.ruc.dk/isg\\_en/IndianOcean/](http://www.ruc.dk/isg_en/IndianOcean/)

19 Soske, “Navigating Difference”

20 R. Muponde, “Ngugi’s Gandhi: Resisting India”, *scrutiny*2, 13, 2, 2008, pp 164-174

21 C. Soudien, “Caste, Class and Race: Continuities and Discontinuities across Indian and South African Schools”, *South African Historical Journal*, 57, 2007, pp 113-133

22 P. Bonner, “Labour, Migrancy and Urbanization in South Africa and India, 1900-60”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1-2, 2009, pp 69-95

23 S. Sarkar, “Labour History in India and South Africa: Some Affinities and Contrasts”, *African Studies*, 66, 2-3, 2007, pp 181-200 and P. Alexander, “Women and Coal Mining in India and South Africa, c 1900-1940”, *African Studies*, 66, 2-3, 2007, pp 201-222

24 M. Williams, *The Roots of Participatory Democracy: Democratic Communists in South Africa and Kerala, India* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2008) and P. Heller, “Democratic Deepening in India and South Africa”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1-2, 2009, pp 123-149

and Stephanie Tawa Lama-Rewal's emerging research on urban governance, participation and the voice of the poor in South African and Indian cities, which looks at the relative incapacity of the urban poor to influence policy despite the fact that they constitute a numerical majority.<sup>25</sup>

We turn now to examine how the papers collected here extend these trends.

### **Gandhi and Indian Nationalism in South Africa**

As Claude Markovits indicates in his analysis of Gandhian historiography, biographers have either downplayed Gandhi's South African years or treated them teleologically as "a simple preparation to Gandhi's later emergence in India as a nationalist leader". The picture is considerably more complex. Markovits explains:

They seem to think that Gandhi blossomed fully only in India and suggest that there was something preordained about his eventual return there. On the other hand, keeping contingency in mind, one could choose to present the South African episode as a kind of separate life, with its own logic, and not necessarily as a preparation for what followed.<sup>26</sup>

The papers collected in the first section take this idea of Gandhi's South African experience as a "separate life, with its own logic" as their starting point. They then proceed to probe the afterlives, microhistories and legacies of Gandhi's satyagraha in the South African political arena both before and after apartheid. At the same time, they explore the interactions between Gandhism as it unfolds in South Africa after his departure and its different manifestations in India. The broader implications of these exchanges for the mutual links between Indian and African nationalism are also probed.

Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie starts by investigating the key feature of Gandhi's satyagraha campaign in order to elucidate its continuing role in South African public life. As she indicates, most commentators have assumed that passive resistance only emerges at two key moments, namely the Passive Resistance campaign of 1946-1948 and the Defiance Campaign in 1952. However, as she demonstrates, there has been a persistent stream of activities that kept Gandhi's techniques alive: these included acts of civil disobedience in the late 1910s, 1920s and 1930s by figures such as Manilal Gandhi, the Mahatma's son who stayed behind in South Africa to edit *Indian Opinion*, a publication that played a critical role in keeping Gandhism alive. Manilal's visit to India to support his father's campaign and his experience in an Indian gaol were important in cross-fertilising South African and Indian practices of resistance. Dhupelia-Mesthrie brings the story up to date by examining two contemporary struggles around HIV/AIDS and housing and demonstrates how the traditions on which they draw share something in common with satyagraha thinking.

While Dhupelia-Mesthrie examines the influence of Gandhism from the point of view of broader social movements and trends, Goolam Vahed scrutinises the same terrain from the perspective of an individual life, that of Dr G.M. "Monty" Naicker (1910-1978), a political activist who, throughout his life, drew heavily on Gandhian

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25 <http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/Research/SA-India/PeopleandProjects/SocialSciences.htm>

26 C. Markovits, *The Un-Gandhian Gandhi: the Life and Afterlife of the Mahatma* (Permanent Black, Delhi, 2003), p 78

thinking. Like many others of the South African black elite, Naicker received his medical training in Edinburgh where he was also exposed to anti-imperialist thinking through the Edinburgh Indian Association. He cut his political teeth back in Durban in the 1940s and became increasingly drawn into more radical currents of Natal Indian politics, eventually playing a leading role in the 1946-1948 Passive Resistance campaign aimed at challenging growing segregationist measures in Durban. A visit to India in 1947 was important in garnering further support for and awareness of struggles in South Africa and in uniting the struggle of Africans and Indians, a frontier across which Gandhi had never ventured. During his involvement in the Defiance Campaign, he sought to extend and consolidate these political alliances.

In both the 1946-1948 and 1952 campaigns, Gandhian non-violence was pivotal, with Naicker playing a key role in propagating these ideas, particularly through his close association with Albert Luthuli. However, as state terror mounted, many activists began to abandon non-violence and shift towards ideas of armed struggle although, as both Vahed and Suttner demonstrate, the relationship between these two positions was by no means starkly either-or. During the 1960s and 1970s Naicker was a target of state reprisals and he was repeatedly detained and banned. Yet, throughout his political career, he remained fervently Gandhian. As Vahed indicates, “in Monty’s mind the Passive Resistance campaign was a re-enactment of the earlier movement of 1913: the Gandhi symbolism, the enthusiasm and the moral triumphalism. Going to jail, reading Gandhi’s autobiography in prison, visiting India, crossing the Transvaal border were all examples of playing out the struggle on Gandhian terms”.<sup>27</sup>

As Vahed indicates, Naicker and others in the South African Indian Congress were in touch with Gandhi and Nehru, a conversation that fed ideas between Indian and African nationalist thinking. Suttner picks up on these themes. His focus is on mapping out phases and characteristics of ANC masculinities as a way of rethinking the standard periodisation of ANC history. His analysis seeks to capture this masculinity through close attention to dress, gesture and symbol. He also pays close attention to how women positioned themselves in the ANC in response to these ideas and in contrast to the Indian Congress approach in India.

In pursuing this analysis, he draws on Indian historical scholarship whilst also highlighting the influences of Indian nationalism on ANC modes of uniform and dress. These include the Gandhi cap/topi and the possible symbolic parallels in the political development of Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army. The suit was initially adopted in South Africa for petitioning, much like the one Gandhi wore before shifting to a loincloth. The suit was a dress form adopted historically for the conference table. It became the clothing of the ANC in conference but on occasions, ANC leaders demonstrated their distinct subnational identities in the costume they wore for specific occasions, for example that of the abaThembu for a court appearance in the case of Mandela. Despite his avowed non-violence, Luthuli at times appeared in uniform, capable of potential militaristic interpretation. This was, however, complex, because the uniform was worn with a “Gandhi cap”.

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27 G Vahed, “Monty ... Meets Gandhi ... Meets Mandela: the Dilemma of Non-Violent Resisters in South Africa, 1940-1960”, this volume

Crain Soudien's paper moves in a neo-Gandhian direction and asks how Gandhian ideas might be applied to current social theory on Africa. As Soudien indicates, current thinking on Africa is caught in one of two positions: either a reproduction of Western modernity or a wishful nativism which seeks to retrieve a pure Africanness apparently untouched by the ravages of colonialism and modernity. He asks how one might avoid the sterility of these two positions characterised by envy ("the mimicking of its subordination") or revenge ("the achievement of subordination of its subordinators").<sup>28</sup>

Soudien suggests that aspects of Gandhi's thinking could take us forward since Gandhi provides us with a way of "understanding how we might see outside of the logic of dominance". Two aspects of Gandhian thinking are highlighted: first a critique of "masculinised conceits of civilisation" and its reliance on violence (what Soudien dubs "an ontology of anti-heroism") and second a non-teleological approach to the past which allows it to function as a site of contingency and experiment.<sup>29</sup>

Combining these approaches would open up new vistas: "It would come to terms with the aggression prescribed for manhood and the privileged status expressions of violence which are accorded in ways of telling the story of what it means to be a human being. It would recognise the collusion between colonial and precolonial masculine hegemonies in displacing the complex stories of everyday life in Africa."<sup>30</sup>

A Gandhian stress on contingency would allow us to retrieve the complex ways in which people in Africa live with and in complexity: "our challenge in contemporary society is how to make explicit the knowledge practices that are inside of these ways of living across modernity and that are already there, and to make those the deliberate subject of public debate and dialogue."<sup>31</sup>

### **Comparative Possibilities**

In discussing how to promote scholarly interaction between South Africa and India, Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie sets out a rich agenda for ways in which scholars in both countries would be alert to the rich scholarships of the other country as well as the archival resources in each region.<sup>32</sup>

The papers in this section seek to take forward this injunction firstly by exposing a South African audience to the work of two prominent Indian scholars and secondly by asking what this work might mean for South African scholars and what new possibilities might be sparked by setting the two scholarly traditions alongside each other.

Ramachandra Guha, a prominent biographer and historian, writes a historiographical meditation arising out of his monumental work of contemporary

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28 C Soudien, "Renaissances, African and Modern: Gandhi as a Resource?", this volume

29 Soudien, "Renaissances, African and Modern"

30 Soudien, "Renaissances, African and Modern"

31 Soudien, "Renaissances, African and Modern"

32 Dhupelia-Mesthrie, "The Place of Indian"

history, *India After Gandhi the History of the World's Largest Democracy*.<sup>33</sup> In this piece, he points out that Indian history almost invariably deals with pre-1947 periods. While sociology and anthropology have a great deal to say about independent India, historians of India have not directed their attention to the last fifty years. In part, this phenomenon has to do with the difficulties of gaining access to recent archival records and private papers. These are not, however, insurmountable problems – there are collections of private papers available, particularly at the Nehru Memorial Library in Delhi and also in other countries. The periodical press is a largely unmined treasure trove of information, while oral history as a resource has not yet been exploited in any systematic way.

This piece invites comparison with South African historiographical traditions which present almost a perfect mirror image: the recent past has been written about in extensive detail, it is the distant past that remains neglected. A second point of comparison pertains to oral history, a discipline that, as Guha notes, is not well developed in India. By contrast, the practice of oral history is well developed in the South African academy. The techniques evolved here would be of interest to historians in India and could form the basis of a productive dialogue.

P.N. Mukherji discusses the question of how to indigenise social sciences whilst avoiding the pitfalls of nativism. In keeping with much contemporary work, he begins by debunking the universalistic claims of Western social science. He then sets out two case studies: first the failure of the US-inspired Community Development in India, and second debates on multiculturalism which he shows to possibly be rather shallow when viewed from the perspective of India's long durée of complex cultural interaction.

Mukherji summarises his position by stating that one of the most epistemologically relevant questions in the social sciences is: “The social sciences that originated in the West are indigenous to the West, but are they necessarily universal for the rest?”<sup>34</sup>

Much of his argument relates to the relationship between the universal and the particular, and the particular and the universal. He shows its relevance to attempts to absolutise Western notions of the nation as having originated in Europe and having unqualified application everywhere. This has considerable relevance to South Africa, as our scholars develop paradigms suited to South African conditions, not discarding what is in fact universal or at least applicable from the West, but incorporating what is particular or focusing on developing paradigms suited to our conditions and also potentially suited to incorporation into universalised paradigms.

The final section of this special issue “Connecting Public Histories” comprises an article by Eric Itzkin on a largely forgotten monument in Observatory, Johannesburg, which commemorates the thousands of Indian auxiliaries involved as non-combatants in the Anglo-Boer War. Overlooked in official accounts of the time which viewed the conflict as a “white man's war”, these men have likewise been ignored in more recent historiography of the War. Despite its avowed intent to create

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33 R. Guha, *India After Gandhi: the History of the World's Largest Democracy* (Picador, London, 2007)

34 P. N. Mukerji, “The Universal in the Particular: Universalising Social Science”, this volume

a more inclusive picture, this scholarship has largely been silent on the Indian presence in the War. Considerable attention has been focused on African involvement in the conflict and a lot has been written on Gandhi's Volunteer Ambulance Corps. The presence of the Indian auxiliaries remains largely unknown.

This story of a monument plainly visible yet ignored until recently acts as a fitting image for the question of the rich intellectual possibilities that exist between South Africa and India. The evidence for these ties has always been apparent. It is, however, only recently that these possibilities have come into sharper focus and the conditions for realising them have started to come into being. This volume is intended to strengthen the dialogue and prompt further research in this vital area.

### **Abstract**

This article sets out a new body of historiography that explores connections and comparisons between South Africa and India. The article explains the factors behind the emergence of this body of work. On the one hand, the political transition in South Africa has enabled a free flow of people and ideas to and from India. On the other, the transnational turn in the humanities and social sciences has facilitated a move beyond national, regional and areas studies models which constrained older historiographies. The article concludes by placing the articles in this special collection in this emerging historiography.

### **Opsomming**

#### **Inleiding: Suid-Afrika-Indië: Die bevordering van hegte vakkundige bande**

Hierdie artikel sit 'n nuwe historiografiese groep wat die verbintenisse en vergelykings tussen Suid-Afrika en Indië ondersoek, uiteen. Die artikel verduidelik die omstandighede agter die verskyning van hierdie groep. Aan die een kant het die politieke oorgang in Suid-Afrika die vrye vloei van mense en idees na en van Indië moontlik gemaak. Aan die ander kant het die transnasionale wending in die geesteswetenskappe en sosiale wetenskappe 'n skuif verby nasionale, streeks- en gebiedstudiesmodelle wat ouer historiografieë beperk het, vergemaklik. Die artikel sluit af deur die artikels in hierdie spesiale versameling in die konteks van hierdie opkomende historiografie te plaas.

### **Keywords**

African and Indian nationalism; comparative history; connected histories; Gandhi; Indian Ocean Studies; neo-Gandhism; passive resistance; satyagraha; South Africa-India; transnationalism.

### **Sleutelwoorde**

Aaneengeskakelde geskiedenis; Afrika en Indiese nasionalisme; Gandhi; Indiese Oseaanstudies; neo-Gandhiïsme; passiewe weerstand; satyagraha; Suid-Afrika-Indië; transnasionale; vergelykende geskiedenis.