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Burning, breaking and finding your way back to God: Examining the intimacies of care in a Verulam temple

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Johannesburg, August 2018

DECLARATION

I, Youlendree Appasamy, declare that this research report is my own work which is submitted for the partial fulfilments of the Master of Arts degree in Political Science at the Department of Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This is original work which has not been submitted before, at this or any other institution of higher education. I further declare that I am the owner of the copyright thereof, and all used materials in the dissertation have been acknowledged.

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Signature **Date**

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Abstract:

This project seeks to unpick the systems of care available to domestic violence survivors through the lens of Hinduism. The research hinges on the experiences of abuse survivors and the aim is to understand how care is given and received inside and outside the setting of the Shri Siva Subramaniar Alayam in Verulam, which is a small town in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Care within South African Hindu Indian communities has largely been under-theorised due to its minority religion status in South Africa and its decentralised formulation. The vast amount of literature focussing on trauma care and spirituality references a Christian framework of knowledge. The structures of care flowing through and around the temple will be examined in greater detail through interviews with temple congregants who are survivors of domestic abuse, and the intimacies of care of the temple-going community is highlighted by this research.

Key words and terms: care, Hinduism, domestic abuse, Tamil, temple, intimacies of care, indenture, spirituality

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Lastly (and yorl already know how thankful I am) thank you to all my ancestors who travelled the *kala pani* a long time ago. You live on.

Personal statement:

I don't think this research would have come about if I was not born a Tamil woman, with a history of indenture on both sides of my family. The sites of research, Verulam and Shri Siva Subramaniar Alayam, are places I frequented as a child. Many family members reside in Verulam and the surrounding areas, and some attend the temple. This thesis is both an ode to these people, and those I haven't met, and don't know, but whose presence is felt by their absence. I could not have accessed the places I have, nor the people I spoke to, if it wasn't for fictive and real kinship with the temple congregation and research participants. I am interested in acts of care and Hinduism as I am Hindu, and I do feel that incorporating elements of Hinduism in my life has helped me care for myself and for others. I experienced a shift from teenage indifference to religious comfort, after experiencing sexual violence. I felt that there is a gap in understandings of healing, violence, religion and Hinduism in South Africa, so hoped this thesis would go some way in filling it. I care deeply about the healing processes of women because the violence we endure becomes an everyday burden – and that needs to stop. Throughout my childhood I heard stories about abusive husbands, male partners, brothers and uncles. It is from that place of anger at the secrecy of these abuses that I hope the knowledge in this thesis can be useful for women for whom spirituality forms a large part of their lives – a safe haven and comfort to continue living after and through trauma.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Hinduism has a rich history in South Africa (Vahed and Lal, 2013). It has a varied history, stories that differ from the perspective of whose telling it and the audience receiving it. This thesis forms part of a small, but growing archive on circuits of care, Hinduism and trauma embodied and resolved by Indian women in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. This research aims to unpick the complexities of care and care-giving in the context of Hindu spirituality.

Spirituality, religion and faith bear different meanings although these are not fixed. A working definition of religion is as follows: "a belief in the existence of an invisible world, distinct but not separate from the visible one, that is home to spiritual beings with effective powers over the material world (Ellis and ter Haar 2004: 14)," (Ellis and ter Haar, 2013: 121). However, in their use of the term religion, Ellis and ter Haar (2013) acknowledge the presence of spirits and spirituality in their definition, thus placing the two terms (religion and spirituality) not at direct odds with each other, but interdependent in human relations with the "invisible world" (Ellis and ter Haar, 2013: 121). For the purposes of clarity in this thesis, spirituality will be used only when participants have named their practices as such, and when speaking of Hinduism, the term religion will be used. To avoid binary thinking about these concepts, I will not relegate or fix either term to a specific locale.

Similar to the relationship between spirituality and religion is the relationship between Hinduism and Hindu spirituality. "South African Hinduism diverges in many aspects from classical Hinduism, reflecting different social conditions and individual opportunities," (Kuper, 1960: 186). Hinduism, for the purposes of the research, will be limited to Saivism and Amman traditions of worship, as these are the spiritual traditions that the temple itself uses as a Siva Alayam (temple). Saivism is the Brahminic tradition of worshiping Lord Siva.

The Amman tradition, Kuper defines as worship of "non-Brahminic deities […] usually of village origin and include the Seven Sisters, who are worshipped collectively and individually and have become identified with the Sakti and may be called Amma" (Kuper, 1960: 191). Hindu spirituality can be defined as the concept of divinity, as Kuper (1960) states. This is not simply a personal relationship to the Gods, or individual preference but "something eternal, formless, omniscient, indivisible. It may be spoken of by a hundred different names […] and may be conceived in various forms" (Kuper, 1960: 189). This is not an entirely conceptually clear term, thus, research into how this intersects with material forms of care receiving and giving is of utmost importance to the research.

The research was conducted in Verulam, a small town that sprang up as a result of indentured labour in the areas north of eThekwini, Durban. The Shri Siva Subramaniar Alayam (temple) (SSSA) is where majority of research, took place. Ironically, Verulam was created by a group of Methodists who left England to farm sugar-cane and spread the gospel. "Verulam was founded in 1850 by William Josiah Irons, who was a Wesleyan, as a settlement exclusively for the Wesleyan immigrants to Natal" (Verulam Historical Association, 2016). One of the original churches built by the Methodists lies in ruins on Groom Street. It is on the same street as the Verulam library, and when I worked from the archiving center beneath the library, I walked past the ruin and wondered how the Methodists would feel, now that the town is chock-a-block with temples, mosques and Pentecostal Christian churches. Verulam has a robust religious profile, and besides the religious institutions, there are a number of undocumented religious groupings of so-called backyard temples and churches. Verulam is a firmly working class area, in the same vein as Ottawa, Phoenix and Tongaat – other Indian townships in the area. Many people who live in Verulam are Hindu, and there is in excess of five large temples in the area. Shri Gopalal Alayam in Temple Valley is another notable

temple in the area and was created in 1888 by Babu Talwansing (Verulam Historical Association, 2016).

The aim of this research is to contribute to an understanding of care networks in South Africa by using the theoretical lens of an ethics of care. An ethic of care, defined by Sevenhuijsen (2003), refers to four core values – namely "attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness" (Sevenhuijsen, 2003: 21). A care ethic is both "a moral orientation" (Sevenhuijsen, 2003: 21) and "a social practice" (Sevenhuijsen, 2003: 21).

> "This approach makes it clear that, on a daily basis, care plays a role in diverse locations in society. In this way, a counterbalance is offered for the constantly recurring tendencies to romanticise and privatise care, and to link it with the symbols and norms of femininity (Sevenhuijsen 1997 and 1998; Tronto 1993)." (Sevenhuijsen, 2003: 21)

The report examines the structures of care organised by and around the temple and elaborates the characteristics of a care ethic that uses Hindu spirituality as a tool for healing from trauma and abuse. As a secondary aim, it will also contribute to existing archives of diasporic Tamil Hinduism in South Africa, adding to the work of scholars such as Nirmala Gopal (2013), Goolam Vahed (2010; 2013), Ashwin Desai (2010; 2013) and Alleyn Diesel (2005).

The specific iteration of Hinduism in South Africa is central to my research. I am interested in the experiences, care and healing rituals of the South Asian diaspora in South Africa. As Lal and Vahed (2013) demonstrate, "invented traditions" (Lal and Vahed, 2013:1) came from the dislocation of indenture and apartheid's flattening of a heterogeneous group of South Asian religions, cultures and traditions. Many temples that strongly follow an Amman tradition of worship are not as formalised or centralised as some of the other main religions in

South Africa such as Christianity or Islam (Kuper, 1960). In their paper examining different types of Hinduism in South Africa, Lal and Vahed (2013) note that colonial officials saw Hinduism as distinctly more "chaotic" than supposedly more respectable and centralised religions such as Islam.

> "Whatever Islam's other problems from the viewpoints of Protestants, it was at least a recognised religion; but the same could not be said for Hinduism, a chaotic faith that lacked a historical founder, a central church, even a text which all its adherents could agree upon as the ultimate source of 'canonical' authority" (Lal and Vahed, 2013: 3).

Although the authors speak of how Hinduism was perceived in the past, they note that despite the manifestations of Hinduism over the years and attempts at 'simplifying' the religion to resemble a Protestant-inspired modernity, Amman traditions still bear the aforementioned hallmarks.

Temporally, the research is focused on the present day – in other words, on post-apartheid South Africa. However, of importance to the research are histories of indenture. Thus, parts of the research will link to colonial and apartheid pasts where necessary. Singh (2013) elaborates on domestic violence and the roles of faith-based organisations, namely Maha Sabha's in the Durban area, and links the high rates of domestic violence to indenture. Singh (2013) argues that: "Much of this [domestic violence] is attributed to the fact that when indentured labourers were first brought into the country, the ratio of active male labour to women and children was 75% and 25% respectively," (Singh, 2013: 142). Where necessary, present day realities of trauma survivors will be contextualised in the generational trauma of indenture, colonialism and apartheid.

Research questions

The primary research question is**:**

- Through the lens of Hindu spirituality, how is care-giving and care expressed and felt to survivors of marital abuse?

Secondary questions are:

- How is care organised in the fieldsite when faced with caring for abuse survivors?
- What care practices do abuse survivors express?
- How are these forms of care situated in Hindu spirituality and religion?

The primary research question is a broad vessel that encompasses the main themes of my research: Hindu spirituality, organisation of care and marital abuse survivors. The supporting questions explore these specific themes in greater detail. The mechanics of how Hindu spirituality provides a type of care to survivors of trauma is important, and is closely linked to that is how Hindu spirituality affects the moral codes inculcated in adherents of Hinduism. The second supporting question leads to thinking about how care is expressed outside of the formalised structures of the temple – and focuses on abuse survivors themselves. The last question speaks to the religious and spiritual aspects of the research which is important to explore because this provides the practicalities of how care is expressed or made tangible. From there, the parameters of my fieldwork are set, as I will have an understanding of how care, trauma and spirituality are normatively related.

Chapter outline:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first section introduces the reader to the fundamentals of the research, namely spirituality and trauma, Hinduism in South Africa and the social context of Verulam, as well as how care and domestic violence. Using the working definition of spirituality from political scientists Ellis and Ter Haar (2013), I go on to use

Kuper (1960) to explain the bigger picture of religion and Hindu temple culture in Durban and surrounds. Sevenhuijsen (2003) is used to elaborate on an ethics of care in society – it's necessity, how it functions as a social practice and how it is undervalued. I then explain how interrogating the power dynamics of care is what the research aims to do. The second part of the chapter deals with this report's research questions – substantiates their importance and situates the study at the nexus of care, indenture, religion and domestic violence.

Chapter 2: Violence and circuits of care in the context of indenture and spirituality

This substantive chapter constitutes the literature review of the research report and is divided into five main sub-categories. I will address each subdivision and its relation to understanding the proceeding chapters. The first sub-category, Locating violence, does just that by looking into South Africa's Domestic Violence Act. Within this category I also look into the hypocrisies and contradictions of the Act in practice – as well as the structural (policing and healthcare aspects) inefficiencies of implementing the Act in South Africa. This is done in the section titled Vulnerability in public, violence in private, where I discuss Vetten's (2013 and 2017) substantive work into the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, and how already marginalised groups of people are further let down by the structures in place to deal with domestic violence. The second sub-category is titled A rupture in everyday life, and deals with prevailing concepts on trauma and its relation to spiritual practice. This discussion relies heavily on Herman's (1997) work into sexual violence, post-traumatic stress disorder and spirituality. The third sub-category is on care and social institutions – and speaks more broadly on different ethics of care, intersectionality in care work and how care is undervalued in a capitalistic system. Glenn (2000), Collins (2002) and Thompson (1998) are important theorists I draw on to make sense of different conceptualisations of care, and Hassim explains more on social welfare, and the way the state 'cares' for people in South Africa. The fourth

sub-category speaks to the ways in which spirituality and trauma overlap in South Africa (drawing on the work of Manda) and the fifth sub-category uses Desai (2010, 2013), Lal (2013) and Diesel (2005) to think through how indenture shaped certain family conditions and gender roles in South Africa – all relevant when thinking through how caring relationships form within ex-indentured communities, as well as how Hinduism and temple culture differs to that in India.

Chapter: 3 Theoretical framework and methodology

The first part of this chapter deals with my theoretical framework. This framework has been chosen as it represents the most sensitive and open away to allow for dialogue and research with vulnerable subjects (namely abuse survivors). The authors who provided instructional in this section are Narayan (1989) and Abu-Lughod (1998). These authors elaborations on the role of the researcher who comes from the same community they are researching, are important to note, as it structured the framework for the research. In the section that dealt with methodology, I relied on Allen (2010) whose work with Irish domestic violence survivors mirrored my own research design and feminist approach. Notes on the sampling techniques and number of participants in the study are also located here.

Chapter 4: Ethical considerations

This chapter deals with the ethics involved and the procedure I followed when conducting interviews with vulnerable subjects in a small town. Anonymity and building trust with research participants were key components of maintaining high ethical standards.

Chapter 5: A monument to the forefathers

This is the first chapter that deals with the research gathered during fieldwork and involves interviews with the temple committee of the Shri Subramaniar Alayam in Verulam, as well as historical records tracing the history of the temple and its role in the community.

Chapter 6: 'How did I survive those years?'

The title of this chapter comes from a question one of the research participants asked herself during our interview – and encapsulates the chapter's investigation into the inner lives of women who were in abusive marriages and worship at the Shri Subramaniar Alayam. This is the second chapter that deals with information gleaned during my fieldtrips and deals with the narratives of two research participants.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: who takes care of temple aunty?

This chapter rounds up the research report and takes the discussion to some concluding points, restates the significance of research into care offered to domestic violence survivors through spiritual institutions and states where the research could be taken in the future.

Chapter 2: Violence and circuits of care in the context of indenture and spirituality

Locating violence

In the absence of violence, would there be a need for care? This section of the literature review deals with the construction of a specific type of violence – domestic violence – and how discourses about this topic have expressed themselves in South Africa. As Njezula (2006) notes, "In South Africa there is lack of clarity with regard to definitions assigned to concepts like 'domestic', 'family', 'household', 'violence' and 'abuse' (Van der Spur, 1994)" (Njezula, 2006: 16). The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines intimate partner violence as "any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship" (WHO, 2012). They further state that acts of physical violence, sexual violence, emotional and psychological abuse and controlling behaviours all form part of intimate partner violence. With regards to domestic violence WHO specifically states that "the term 'domestic violence' is used in many countries to refer to partner violence but the term can also encompass child or elder abuse, or abuse by any member of a household" (WHO, 2012).

Researchers who assessed the effectiveness of this definition in the Indian context noted that although the definition covered much ground in what constitutes domestic violence, the definition fell short of the mark because it was not "culturally-tailored" (Kalokhe et al, 2015: 10) and needed to be adapted to the specificities of Indian victims of domestic violence. For example, the researchers note how the definition did not highlight the ways in which marital family members could curb a partner's reproductive right as much as intimate partner or

spouse could, nor does it highlight the economic aspects of abuse that Indian participants in the research spoke of (Kalokhe et al, 2015).

The South African Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 states that domestic violence means:

"(a) Physical abuse

(b) Sexual abuse

(c) Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse

(d) Economic abuse

(e) Intimidation

(f) Harassment

(g) Stalking

(h) Damage to property

(i) Entry into the complainant's residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence

(j) Any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of the complainant" (Department of Justice, 1998).

It also expands the definition from the WHO one, by including marital family members in domestic relationships and economic abuse. This definition will be used as it is clear, and makes provisions for intimidation, harassment and importantly, directly relates to South African domestic violence victims.

Of the 275 536 applications for protection orders that were brought forward in 2015/16, "approximately 99 076 (or 35.9%) were made final," (Vetten, 2017: 10). The Domestic Violence Act is clearly well-used but the definition is not without its flaws. Vetten (2017)

points to police mismanagement and responsibility in slowing the justice process for victims. In a recent report on the accountability of the police in enforcing the Domestic Violence Act, Vetten states "In 2009, the most recent year for which figures are available, 57% of the women who were killed died at the hands of their intimate partners. Calculated as a prevalence rate of 5.6 per 100 000, this murder rate was five times the global average" (Vetten, 2017: 10). Similar to Hassim's (2006) assertion that some social groups applying for social welfare were seen to be more deserving of care than others, Lisa Vetten (2013) argues that certain victims of domestic abuse were seen to be more deserving of care than others. "Indeed, by 2011 women needed to compete to be the poorest of the poor, amongst the most disadvantaged and rural, the ill and uneducated, to qualify for state services. This latter framing reduces women to the objects of good works, with the state reserving the power to define the administrable content and boundaries of those good works" (Vetten, 2013: 158).

This opens up more questions on the intersections of care and violence – specifically domestic violence and its complex framing in contemporary South Africa. One line of argument is that intersectionality needs to be applied to analysing domestic violence as certain groups of women are constructed as legitimate victims of abuse, and others are not. By examining the intersections of the actors in domestic violence, one can potentially propose different solutions to different needs and social conditions of those in need. To understand this in South Africa, one needs to understand how the apartheid government neglected domestic violence – and relegated it to the private, intimate sphere of family and domestic life.

> "By the 1980s the marital power was in the process of being abolished for women classified as white, Indian or coloured. The apartheid state being even less attentive to gender relations within black African families, it took until the Recognition of

> Customary Marriages Act of 1998 before the last vestiges of marital power were abolished for black African women." (Vetten, 2013: 32)

Racial hierarchies affected the distribution of meagre resources that the state and legal systems offered to domestic abuse victims but broadly speaking, the issue was largely ignored. Women's organisations, and in the democratic era, non governmental organisations, pushed this issue to the forefront of politics and policy-making but "the domestic violence sector thus has no clear political identity. While the research cluster largely self-defines as feminist, the service cluster is too large and disparate to do so" (Vetten, 2013: 126).

Vulnerability in public, violence in private

Vetten (2013) speaks of the distinction between private and public – and how that serves to place regulation and policy-making in the public sphere – and where the private is "freedom from such supervision and is the realm of personal autonomy and private choice (Rose, 1987)" (Vetten, 2013: 10). It is gendered too, as care is: men are the "rightful occupants of the public and women the keepers of the private, the home specifically" (Vetten, 2013: 10).

Importantly, these fictive representations of the private and public come to hide the intricacies of domestic violence under the shield of the private – and as a result, abusers fail to be brought to justice because this realm is not subject to the same checks and balances as the public one. And, as Vetten (2013) notes, when domestic violence becomes everyone's concern, it is rendered apolitical and no one government sector, or stakeholder, takes responsibility in coordinating attempts with the various members to stop domestic violence at its root causes.

> "In showing how privacy can be reinvented as men's right to terrorise and subjugate women, feminists have raised questions around the nature of women's citizenship, for what is experienced in private may be perceived as isolated and individual, rather than pervasive and systematic. Thus instead of domestic violence becoming a matter of public concern, it remains a private trouble (Schneider, 1986)." (Vetten, 2013: 10)

As mentioned earlier, certain victims are constructed by the state, as well as by fellow members of the victim's community, family, religious and/or traditional organisations as deserving or undeserving of care and help through various processes. This false binary is based on socially constructed stereotypes (Bograd, 2010: 30), but "definitions of 'real' or 'appropriate' victims also inform social policy and informal practices" (Bograd, 2010: 30) Victimisation can be denied by invisibilising certain victims – for example, the language used to describe domestic violence can erase queer victims. Often in same gender relationships the victim and batterer is not distinguishable due to socially constructed stereotypes – they are seen to be equally as physical – so how could abuse happen? Action strategies to end domestic violence are usually premised, or default, to middle class white women in nuclear families – by using this as the model, clearly other communities will not be adequately dealt with, or analysed – and "unwittingly this defocusses concern from poor women of colour who remain unseen or defined as a dehumanised Other and undeserving of services (Crenshaw, 1994)" (Bograd, 2010: 30).

Women, or femmes who fight back disrupt the idea of a helpless and vulnerable victim, so they too seen as less deserving of care. Sex workers, substance abusers, HIV positive and incarcerated victims of domestic violence are not offered the same care either, for the same reasons (Bograd, 2010: 30). Lastly, "victimisation is denied when domestic violence is

defined as culturally normal for groups different from the dominant white culture – this "minimizes the extent of domestic violence in white families, ignores the complexity of other 'cultures' values concerning intimate relationships and conflict resolution (Fry and Bjorkqist, 1997)" (Bograd, 2010: 31).

> "Not only do different patterns of domestic violence have different consequences for different families but intersectionality also asks us to integrate into theory and practice the simple recognition that, for many families, domestic violence is not the only or primary violence shaping family life." (Bograd, 2010: 33)

My research asks what happens to those who are neglected or, on the peripheries of state care – those who are not seen as 'deserving' – and how the experiences of domestic violence can turn people to or away from types of community care that Hinduism as practised in the temple and the home, could offer.

A rupture in everyday life

There are no clear boundary lines, where one can pronounce an action as violent, and another as traumatic (Herman, 1992). Domestic violence and its relationship to trauma is similarly unclear but, the effects on the body are telling and often a sense of helplessness that both a trauma victim and domestic violence survivor share. Domestic violence survivors experience trauma but not all trauma survivors experience domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Act (1998) outlines the type of abusive behaviour that could result in feelings of fear, powerlessness and hopelessness (Ohio Domestic Violence Network, 2013), which parallels Herman's (1992) definition of trauma.

Herman (1992) noted that:

> "Psychological trauma is an affiliation of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature,

> we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning." (Herman, 1992: 33)

The word trauma finds its root in the Greek word *traumat-, titroskein*, which means to "to wound" and "to pierce" respectively (Manda, 2015: 2). A trauma survivor's world suffers a deep "wound" and dependant on whether there is supportive care offered to traumatised people, this wound can re-inscribe helplessness and powerlessness of the traumatised person by the system of meaning that previously offered spiritual and emotional care (Herman, 1992). There are various categories of trauma such as "being a victim of crime, experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault and rape, being abused as a child, surviving a natural disaster, or the death of a loved one. These events are beyond a person's control, and can happen to anyone" (Ohio Domestic Violence Network, 2013). Added to this is the understanding that traumatic events are not "commonplace misfortunes" (Herman, 1992: 33) but "involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe" (Herman, 1992: 33). Thus, in this research, domestic violence is inextricably linked to a form of trauma which elicits feelings of terror, helplessness and a loss of a sense of self in domestic violence survivors.

Effects on the Self and communities

Herman (1992) explored how "the terror, rage, and hatred of the traumatic moment live on in the dialectic of trauma" (Herman, 1992: 50). The dialectic she referred to is the movement between wanting to remember traumatic events and to forget, or compartmentalise negative, violence and painful memories (Herman, 1992). She states:

> "In situations of terror, people spontaneously seek their first source of comfort and protection. Wounded soldiers and raped women cry for their mothers, or for God. When this cry is not answered, their sense of basic trust is shattered. Traumatised people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion." (Herman, 1992: 51)

Herman (1992) states a consequence of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (a psychological disorder a traumatised person can develop) is a "loss of sustaining faith" (Herman, 1992: 121) in a traumatised person's system of meaning. The trauma from domestic violence often manifests in a loss of identity or sense of self, loss of the ability to control one's emotions, decision-making faculties and sense of connection to the world outside of a violent marital relationship (Ohio Domestic Violence Network, 2013).

Care and social institutions

> "Care is more than a task; it involves emotional labour and relationship (Finch and Groves, 1983). Care is also active and passive, involving physical and non-physical presence (Land, 2002). Care is embedded in personal relationships of love and obligation, and in the process of identity formation." (Lewis and Giullari, 2006: 178-179)

In Lewis and Guillari's (2006) outline of the affective nature of care and care-giving, they point to how care is of primary importance to the healthy and happy functioning of living, sentient beings. Glenn (2000) provides an important working definition of care as practice that is defined in two parts: caring about and caring for.

> "'Caring about' engages both thought and feeling, including awareness and attentiveness, concern about and feelings of responsibility for meeting another's needs. "Caring for" refers to the varied activities of providing for the needs or well-being of another person." (Glenn, 2000: 86)

This definition is useful because it clarifies that everyone needs care – it is not relegated to the most vulnerable in societies, or those who are not capable of caring for themselves. "Often only children, the elderly, the disabled, or the chronically ill are seen as requiring care, while the need for care and receiving of care by so-called independent adults is suppressed or denied" (Glenn, 2000: 87). Another useful reason for this definition is that it highlights the interdependence of care work, and the notions of reciprocity in relationships of care. "Generally we think of the caregiver as having the power in the relationship; but the care receiver, even if subordinate or dependent, also has agency/power in the relationship" (Glenn, 2000: 87).

Carol Gilligan adds to this working definition by highlighting the ways in which the notion of 'care' operates in a patriarchal world – and how the moral development of humans has led to this gendered differentiation.

> "Care is a feminist, not a feminine ethic, and feminism, guided by an ethic of care, is arguably the most radical (in the sense of going to the roots) liberation movement in human history. Released from the gender binary and hierarchy, feminism is not a women's issue or a battle between women and men; it is the movement to free democracy from patriarchy." (Gilligan, 2013: 29).

Her work highlights the limitations of care, when thought of as, inherently, woman's work, and shows us the possibilities of caring as a radical act beyond a gender binary imposed onto the act and feeling.

In conjunction to Gilligan (2013), the failures of conventional one-size-fits-all care models are well-documented by many black feminist theorists, who have noted how racialisation of care and care work adds a different dimension to the concept and its attendant actions. "While theories of care have challenged the universalism claimed for the theories of justice, caring theories themselves have usually been framed in universal terms," writes Audrey Thompson (1998), who posits that conventional care models are premised on a white, middle class nuclear family. Thompson (1998) elaborated on how, if this "universal" notion remains unchallenged, it narrows the scope of how care is conceptualised and functions in different people's lives. This not only changes the relationship between care and ethics, but the private/intimate and the public/open binaries that shape much literature on care.
Glenn (2000) also notes that:

> "To the extent that caring is devalued, invisible, underpaid, and penalized, it is relegated to those who lack economic, political, and social power and status. And to the extent that those who engage in caring are drawn disproportionately from among disadvantaged groups (women, people of color, and immigrants), their activity–that of caring–is further degraded." (Glenn, 2000: 84)

In support of these arguments is Lewis (2003), who states: "Black feminism was concerned to struggle for a politics which was both grounded in the 'experiences' of black women and which theorised those experiences. In addition, many black feminists focussed their political

activity on the relationship between black women and the welfare state, both as a site of employment and as a provider of services [...] Black feminists, then, had squarely placed the 'caring' professions of the welfare state on the political and intellectual agenda." (Lewis, 2000: 3).

Patricia Hill-Collins composed an ethic of caring in the important Black feminist treatise, *Black Feminist Thought*. In it she describes the three elements that are part of the "alternative epistemology" (Collins, 2002: 262) of African-American women. Personal expression and individuality are one aspect of this ethic, as is emotionality and "the appropriateness of emotions in dialogue" (Collins, 2002: 263). The last component is "developing the capacity for empathy" (Collins, 2002: 263). This ethic is a vital part of articulating a type of black feminist consciousness and provides an alternative perspective on what care and caring should look and feel like.

However important this ethic is for African-American women and black feminists located in the global north, I share Mupotsa's (2007) concerns about Collins formulations on care.

> "I do not know how one would take this approach without over-generalising; re/interpreting the social experiences of people and their lives to fit into a theoretical formula, and the fact that these three components cannot surely relate to all Black women. These components may be present discourses amongst African American women, but I found it very difficult to consume these ideas without an urgent feeling of dis-ease within myself – are all Black women living the 'ethics of caring'?" (Mupotsa, 2007: xv)

To analyse circuits of care and caring, one needs to be aware that it is not neutral concept – it exists at various intersections, and how one thinks of care and caring (although a universal

need), often depends on one's position in the world. This flexibility in thought, and awareness of multiple meanings and possibilities is elaborated on in the next section.

Concentric circles of care

Care and family structures are also important to the research, as the gendered divisions of care become apparent when transposed over the "first resort for caring" (Glenn, 2000: 89), the family unit. Organisations such as the temple often refer to the congregants as members of an extended family – and due to the nature of Verulam and the tight kinship connections in the area, many people are indeed blood relatives or have married into families that all worship at the temple. But, as Glenn (2000: 90) states, "To the extent that caring in the "family" is valued, the notion of "family" must be extended to encompass diverse kin relations, including "voluntary" or "fictive" relationships."

In an example from South Africa, Vivienne Bozalek conducted research with Black students at the University of Western Cape and asked for their understandings and experiences of giving and receiving care. "Caring is understood to be reciprocal and to involve issues of sustenance and survival in the context of extreme poverty. Unpaid caring work has largely been done by grandmothers and over available family members (including children) while mothers and fathers left the house for periods to find waged labour." (Bozalek, 1999: 85) Bozalek demonstrated how lived experiences of care differ to the theoretical understandings of care in nuclear families. "For many of these students, care is understood to involve not only physically nurturing or looking after people but also those activities that contribute to the sustenance and survival of kin. Binary notions of dependence and independence are problematic" (Bozalek, 1999: 86). This speaks to the earlier definition of care, where

interdependence is highlighted as a vital cog in how care works – in family structures and societies.

Care on the fringes

> "Care takes place in commodity spheres and in those at the margins of the market, in the home and outside the home, combing a multitude of tasks and requirements for different specific knowledges. Care makes newly manifest that we cannot clearly delimit lifetime from work time, because the labour of care is precisely to manufacture life." (Precaria a la Deriva, 2010: 3)

Care, as socialist feminists, Precaria a la Deriva (2010) noted, is largely unremunerated and due to its nature, defies easy commodification or remuneration in the market system. This is important to note as the care-workers in the temple are not fully compensated for their care work. Glenn (2000) takes this argument further by noting how:

> "The relegation of care to the private sphere and to women has had two further corollaries: the devaluation of caring work and caring relationships, and the exclusion of both from the arena of equality and rights. Those relegated to the private sphere and associated with its values: women, servants, and children were long excluded from full citizenship." (Glenn, 2000: 85)

Being relegated to the private sphere, as survivors of domestic violence have been, care work remains at the fringes of discussions on equality and rights – it remains on the fringes of the market and is undervalued as a result.

In tandem with experiencing individual interpersonal acts of giving and receiving care, there are larger concentric circuits of care that flow from and alongside it. Strong communal and state care structures are one of the basic components of a healthy, functioning society but "care in institutional settings is compromised by a combination of factors: pressures to cut costs, government regulations, medicalization, and bureaucratization (Foner 1994)" (Glenn, 2000: 86). In Netherlands, Sevenhuijsen (2003) analysed social welfare policies and the "balance of labour and care" (Sevenhuijsen, 2003: 26). Sevenhuijsen (2003) argued that "labour relations should be interpreted more broadly than as mere market transactions between individuals and institutions" (Sevenhuijsen, 2003: 28).

Hassim's (2006) discussion about White Paper on Social Welfare elaborated on how the bureaucratisation of care in policy removes mutual reliance, accountability and trust from caring relationships, and creates a toxic hierarchy of needs.

> "The White Paper names the importance of non-state welfare sector (religious organisation and non-governmental organisations) as well as informal special support systems, including community care, in meeting social service needs. Again, this is posed in the White Paper in the spirit of 'national collective responsibility' but leaves open the question of the precise balance between the different sectors of welfare provisioning." (Hassim, 2006: 116)

The questions about the practicalities of care for abuse survivors such as: who provides care to whom, at what cost, where and what kinds of care are offered are not adequately outlined in the White Paper, nor generally in state social policy documents. Hassim (2006) notes that the transition to a post-apartheid South Africa has changed social policy and care giving structures but still, South Africa only "provides social assistance to social groups seen as 'deserving'" (Hassim, 2006: 126).

Spirituality and trauma: A double-edged sword?

Does spirituality victim blame and shame, (a characteristic of the bystander role, as Herman (1992) would call it) or does it incorporate traumatic experiences, and help heal metaphysical and emotional parts of oneself that are shattered by trauma?

Charles Manda's (2015) research explores – through an intensive, five-year participatory action research project in Pietermaritzberg – the dialectic of trauma. Manda (2015:2) reinforced Herman's (1992) point by stating: "'When a traumatic event occurs, the effect is to shatter the victim's assumptive world or deliver profound invalidation of that world." Religion and spirituality form part of this worldview because of its importance as a system of meaning that comforts, protects and reassures us. Manda's approach is to factor in spiritual or "moral injury" into the schema of care and healing from trauma – moving away from a purely bio-psychosocial approach. Manda (2015) noted that "for those whose core values are theologically founded, traumatic events often give rise to questions about the fundamental nature of the relationship between creator and humankind" (Manda, 2015: 6). Both Herman (1992) and Manda (2015) note that the dialectic of trauma operates in multiple ways and the questioning and search for meaning trauma survivors face can lead to "a state of spiritual alienation" (Manda, 2015: 6), abandonment, or can be of positive spiritual significance.

> "Trauma can also provide a spiritual opening – a crack that opens the way to a deeper sense of life's meaning. Grant (1999) argues that trauma, in spite of its brutality and destructiveness, has the power to open victims to issues of profound existential and spiritual significance." (Manda, 2015: 7)

Csordas (1983) explores spiritual transformation further than Manda (2015), and works primarily in the fields of culture and psychiatry. Csordas (1983) conceived religious healing as "a form of discourse embodying a cultural rhetoric capable of performing three essential persuasive tasks: to create a predisposition to be healed, to create the experience of spiritual empowerment, and to create the concrete perception of personal transformation" (Csordas, 1983: 333). This process is threefold and "activates and controls healing processes endogenous to the supplicant in healing" (Csordas, 1983: 333) either channelling this to a new understanding of the trauma experienced, or changing the way a traumatised person copes or deals with the effects of the experience (Csordas, 1983). "The result is the creation of both a new phenomenological world, and new self-meaning for the supplicant as a whole and holy person" (Csordas, 1983: 333).

Gopal and Nunlall (2017) noted that religious or spiritual engagement by survivors of sexual violence can increase feelings of social support through the communities that worship together – and can positively add to the survivor's "social ecology" (Gopal and Nunlall, 2017: 64), which in turn promotes a sense of resilience in survivors. Resilience, in this context, means a "complex construct that does not only place responsibility on the individual but upon institutions and society (Hart et al, 2016; Masten and Monn, 2015)" (Gopal and Nunlall, 2017: 64).

> "Potter (2007) and Hage (2006) found that spirituality influences women's resilience as believing in God or spirituality not only gave women the strength to leave the abusive partner but to survive after leaving the relationship. However, religious commitments can also cause distress, reported to be caused by the failure of religious leaders to openly speak against violence against women with silence seen as supporting the perpetrator (Herman, 1997)." (Gopal and Nunlall, 2017: 65)

Their findings draw heavily on Ungar's Social Ecology of Resilience Theory – a theory which is similar to the South African concept of Ubuntu (Gopal and Nunlall, 2017). It focalises the complexity of survival by looking at the various layers of support an abused person has access to, and what qualities they themselves possess (Gopal and Nunlall, 2017). This concept is used as a tool by Gopal and Nunlall (2017) to interpret and understand the experiences of Indian women in a shelter for sexually abused women in Durban. They noted that:

> "What determines an individual's resilience therefore involves multiple interacting systems consisting of psychological, social, cultural and biological factors, which determine how one reacts to sexual and physical violation (Masten and Monn, 2015; Rutter, 2006). (Gopal and Nunlall, 2017: 64)

Lastly, taking a more quantitative approach to spirituality, resilience and trauma in a mixed group of participants Connor, Davidson and Lee (2003) asserted that the relationship between religion and "negative life events" (Connor, Davidson and Lee, 2003: 491) is complicated and does not lend itself to easy answers. As with the previous authors in this section, they noted that some people experienced a resurgence of spiritual faith and felt their relationship to God had increased – yet for others, religion hampered what they believed to be their recovery paths. However, for the individuals who noted their religious beliefs helped them through traumatic events, their stress levels were reduced to "pre-event levels" (Baumeister, 1991)" (Connor, Davidson and Lee, 2003: 492) and their overall wellbeing had increased (Connor, Davidson and Lee, 2003). Hope, meaning and purpose are important aspects to healing as Herman (1992), Manda (2015), Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2008)

and others explain – and the spiritual realm has the potential to offer trauma survivors a nurturing and safe space to articulate and move through the pain of trauma.

Religion, family and indenture in South Africa

Because I drank rum and beat your
Young, soft, wet-eyed face
You didn't sing with the gladness of other women
How your mouth was sour like tamarind.
– David Dabydeen's 'Men and Women' (1986)

Placing the high levels of violence against women and femmes during indenture in the ex-British colony of Guyana into a spiritual context, Gaiutra Bahadur asks: "Did some [indentured men] re-enact the Ramcharitmanas offstage? [Did they wonder] What would Ram do?" (Bahadur, 2014: 108). The *Ramcharitmanas* is the play based on the *Ramayana* – one of Hinduism's ancient epic poems. As Bohar et al (2015) noted, violence against women is inscribed texts such as these. Bahadur's exploration of indentures effects on "coolie women" (Bahadur, 2014: 43) explained how integral storytelling was to indentured worker's survival, and how histories and practices from the so-called homeland, India, were synthesised and created anew in the colonies to which labourers were sent.

The history of indenture is also the history of how the relationships between men and women where deconstructed, and then forcibly reconstructed. This also bears relevance to understandings of identity, religion, marriage and family changes which occurred due to the pressures and violence of imperialism. By understanding the nexus of domestic life, and the changes that the indentured labourers underwent, further generalisations can be made about

the construction of the family unit, patriarchy and family and domestic violence in historically indentured communities.

The search for a family, or some form of close kinship structure was "one of the most powerful but under-researched responses of the indentured" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 199).

> "Traditions imagined in Indian were 're-imagined' in the new setting, hence the payment of dowry by men. At the same time as tradition was being re-imagined, and inverted in this case, culture and religion were continuing threads. The suggestion made that the paucity of women somehow gave them greater leverage to discount the continuing power of patriarchal domination […] not only from the state but in families as well." (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 198-199)

Mainly single, male migrants were aboard the first ships carrying indentured labourers to the place then known as Natal. There was a severe gender imbalance so the mission of creating a family structure in the same ways as labourers had done in India was complicated by this (Vahed and Desai, 2010). There was also "a dearth of laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, adultery, dowry and polygamy when the indentured first arrived, mainly because the Natal government did not imagine a settled Indian population" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 199). On one hand, the colonial officials designed a system "to brutalise them into units of labour" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 199) and the other, politicians did not envision an Indian population that called South Africa home.

Indian women, who came to the shores in larger numbers later on, were subject to a range of violence – from sailors, colonial officials, plantation masters and other male indentured and free Indians. In the 1800s, indentured Indian women were known as "grass widows" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 202) – women who were married and had multiple intimate partners. Due to

the gender imbalance on plantations, the fact that men collected payment from plantation owners, no laws governing Indian marriages or laws to resolve disputes about divorce and childcare – women often had more than one intimate partner, and sex work amongst indentured Indian women was common (Vahed and Desai, 2010). White colonial officials projected racist and sexist images of indentured Indian women and they were considered "the 'dregs' of Indian society. The Wragg Commission regarded single women as 'no doubt dissolute and abandoned characters'." (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 204).

However, their stories are not one of subjugation and violence alone – nor are their reasons for leaving due to inherently having no morals, or insatiable sexual desires. "Feminist readings of the *kala pani* see women as migrating to escape the patriarchal gender order in India and their subordinate roles within it. Migration presented an opportunity for women to renegotiate gendered identities" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 204). And their methods of living in a brutal new space, where they were oppressed at multiple intersections, led to their survival taking on forms that upset patriarchal orders, and Victorian moral standards. Unfortunately, "the indentured space was a dangerous site for rupturing the patriarchal order and, over time, the story would be of legislation to re-inscribe the gendered patriarchal order, or approximations of it, and re-institute the 'stable' family" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 204).

Within the 'home' spaces of indentured women, life was no less violent. Family violence was a commonplace occurrence and high levels of intimate partner murder, assault and rape are found in colonial documents of the time (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 206). Two mainstream reasons were given for the brutality: shortage of women and orientalist ideas of lustful and proud Indian men (Vahed and Desai, 2010). Added to this was "the 'immorality' of Indian women." (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 206). On the point of immoral women, which I believe

underpins these arguments, is that the "sexual jealousy" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 206) of men was an expression of their "inability to restore tradition patriarchal dominance" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 206).

> "Migration restructured gender relations. If we add to the gender imbalance the dependence of women on men for rations, then the ability of some women to earn an independent income [mainly as sex workers], so ending their dependence on men, combined with the absence of kinship networks and lack of recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages, in part explains why relationships between indentured men and women were fraught with tension and violence." (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 207)

Colonial officials and the Indian Protector thought to stabilise the situation and decrease the murder and sexual violence rate by putting legislation into place that controlled kinship formation. Regulating marriage came on the back of the Coolie Commission, which stated that Indian women had to be registered as married, concubine or single – and had to register when "valid marriages" (Vahed and Desai, 2010: 210) occurred. But this was not that simple as often the people who were to be married were of different castes and religions, and the law stipulated that a ceremony needed to be had before the marriage. Another issue was literacy in English – very few indentured labourers could read or write in English – Farsi, Tamil, Telegu and Nagari were the main languages that the indentured could communicate in. Martial breakdown was not provided for in the 1872 law – only the Supreme Court could dissolve a marriage but that was an expensive process beyond the economic means of indentured labourers and "unlike the Secretary for Native Affairs, who was authorised to dissolve African marriages, the Protector could not grant divorces amongst Indians" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 212). There was a high request for divorce from Indian women suffering abuse, or whose husbands deserted them, but the laws were unbending. "As Essop-Sheik

(2005) rightly suggests, this must be seen in the broader context of the imperative of control that animated indenture" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 214). If divorces were relatively easy to grant, the courts and colonial officials thought there would be a moral problem amongst the indentured yet again (Desai and Vahed, 2010). The marriage law was meant to tie women to men so that patriarchal control could be re-established and protected.

By the end of indenture, the stable, "nuclear 'moral' family" was quite common (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 216). By the 1890s the gender imbalance was diminished significantly – more females than males were born, many male indentured labourers went back to India under the repatriation scheme and immigration was restricted to females whose husbands were in South Africa. The form that many Indian families took was that of the extended family (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 216).

> "The extended family was an important strategy for surviving in Natal, as scarce resources were pooled to escape the more pernicious effects of poverty. It also allowed for the reproduction of cultural and religious practices – a vital part of the indentured armoury in protecting them from becoming dehumanised units of labour" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 217).

There was no clear understanding of the practices of the 'Indian family' as these extended families were a "mix of class, religion and customs" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 217). However, they were patrilocal, which entails a common household with the father as the patriarch. One of the mainstays of Indian extended families, and one that was cemented in the 1900s – was the roles of each member of the household. "Patterns of domination, in theory, include fathers over sons, men over women, mothers over daughters-in-laws, and elders over the young" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 217).

Shifting Tamil caste identity

During the formalisation process of indentured Indian kinship in South Africa, an interesting development occurred – one pertaining to caste and casteism. Although not the focus of this study, it is important to explain how caste functioned in South Africa in the indentured communities, and how its effects are felt today in ex-indentured, Tamil-speaking communities, who are the broad referent of the research.

Lal and Vahed (2013) note that regional and linguistic affiliations are of more importance to South African Indian people, rather than caste. "Tamil Hindus, Hindi-speaking Hindus, and Gujarati-speaking Hindus have resorted to language/region as the basis for ethno-religious identity. Region/language now function as caste categories" (Lal and Vahed, 2013: 13). Lal and Vahed make the argument that in many diasporic settings such as Fiji, Trinidad and South Africa, "influence of caste is generally held to have been greatly diminished. Social life in these settings is not organised by caste. And yet Hinduism flourished, even showing signs of prosperity in public spaces," (Lal and Vahed, 2013: 14). Kuper (1960) provides some explanation of why caste rigidity has diminished in South Africa.

> "The more democratic and personal religions of Buddhism and Jainism which developed as a reaction against the authoritarianism of Brahminic Hinduism have also left their imprint on the vast system of religious ideas described as Hinduism. In South Africa, with its conglomeration of peoples of different cultural background, Hinduism has again responded not by closing its doors, but extending both its dogma and ritual." (Kuper, 1960: 187)

Figurations of the Hindu woman

"my memory is like the bruise-coloured smoke
that falls wide over the canefields
during the harvest, filled with little dark things
which crumble in my palms."

- Maya Surya Pillay's 'Coolie reads Knausgaard' (2017)

Meer (1972: 37) as quoted in Seedat-Khan (2012: 42-3) accurately described the conditions in which the moral family came to be, and the role of the Indian woman in this:

> "The abnormal structure of the Indian family in South Africa, created in 1860 by the low proportion of women and the restrictions of indenture, was rectified in the second decade of the twentieth century when Indian family life in South Africa settled into traditional conservatism, and women assumed full responsibility for maintaining that conservatism. The home was the bastion of Indian life struggling against a foreign environment; surrounded by strong forces […] it depended upon its trustees, the women."

"The Indian community was not built *de novo*. It often relied on the myths and memories of 'back home'" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 219). The creation of families helped the indentured create their roots in South Africa – they were not a "people without history or future" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 219), but this collective self-styling did not just re-inscribe a neutral concept of a patrilocal family. As Seedat-Khan (2012) noted, "Women in the colonies occupied the lowest rungs on the economic ladder; patriarchal traditions and gendered policies rendered them vulnerable [to violence]" (Seedat-Khan, 2012: 37). "Many women lived lives where violence or the threat of it was an everyday experience" (Desai and Vahed, 2010: 218) but they were not just victims or silent or without agency – they led vibrant and complex lives that the colonial documents couldn't capture and didn't understand.

Building on this narrative of family standardisation, the 'settling' process of ex indentured Indian South Africans is how the legacies of this construction are felt and expressed in contemporary times by ex-indentured South African women. As Seedat-Khan notes, "Challenging the way in which Indian families function and live, and the role that the women play in the social construction of what it means to be an Indian woman in South Africa today needs to begin with the stories of the women who sailed on the ships from India" (Seedat-Khan, 2012: 39). As in the past, she notes, "the social pressures of culture, religion, class and caste on Indian women are instrumental in confining them in a variety of ways to a subordinate position in the family" (Seedat Khan, 2012: 43).

Through doing fieldwork with South African Indian women, Seedat-Khan found that regardless of the subordinated position of Indian women, that "popular representations in South Africa of the Indian women projected by Indians themselves generally emphasised delicacy and dependency" (Seedat-Khan, 2012: 40). This could be said to be part of a larger system of norms and morals that was inculcated into women's understandings of themselves through the indenture and post-indenture periods. "Prestige resides in an idealised household where the women's role is domestic and secluded' (Freund 1991: 415). This notion of delicacy and dependency is the only type of Indian women that is visible in South Africa today (Seedat-Khan, 2012: 40).

Arguing against a single story defining Indian womanhood in South Africa, Seedat-Khan argues that South African Indian women are "multi-tiered constructs" (Seedat-Khan, 2012: 41). This notion encapsulates the flexible and ever-changing nature of culture and community. The concept was coined by Yuval-Davies (1997) who stated that the citizenship

should be linked to the idea of community, or memberships to community rather than to the state.

> "Collectivities and 'communities' are ideological and material constructions, whose boundaries, structures and norms are a result of constant processes of struggles and negotiations, or more general social developments (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992)' (Yuval-Davies, 1997: 8).

These communities and the values that animate them which "interprets the 'good of the community' as a support for its continuous existence as a separate collectivity can become an extremely conservative ideology which would see any internal or external change in the community as a threat" (Yuval-Davies, 1997: 8). The type of conservatism that Yuval-Davis specifically addresses are the ways that women are disadvantaged by the "state of the definition of what constitutes 'the cultural needs of the community' in matters of education, marriage and divorce" (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 11).

> "Such a theory needs to dismantle the identification of the private with the family domain and the political with the public domain; it needs to construct citizenship as a multi-tier concept and to sever it from an exclusive relation to the state. The various sub-, cross- and supra-national and state collectivities of which people are formally and informally citizens can exist in a variety of co-operative and conflicting relationships which would differentially determine the access to resources of different people." (Yuval-Davies, 1997: 22)

Chatterjee's (1993) discussion of Indian nationalism and relegation of women to the domestic sphere for the good of the nationalist cause, relates to the context of South African Indian femininity and constructions of womanhood. Chatterjee (1993) states "the nationalists asserted it [The West] had failed to colonise the inner, essential identity of the East, which lay in its distinctive and superior spiritual culture" (Chatterjee, 1993: 121). Women, in this newly

reconfigured patriarchal context, were recognised only insofar as their good standing and behaviour in the private, domestic and spiritual sphere. “Home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility for protecting and nurturing this quality” (Chatterjee, 1993: 126). Home-making, mothering and religious teaching were all seen as roles for good Indian women to possess in South Africa (and most likely the diaspora over).

Trajectories of Hinduism

> “Sometimes congealing, other times fraying and bursting at the seams, how the indentured sought to reconstitute Hinduism was to lay the foundations for the institutional forms that came about in the first decades of the twentieth century.” (Desai, 2013: 64)

Desai’s (2013) account of the history of Hinduism and the beginnings of temple life in the North Coast of KwaZulu Natal echo the re-imagining of Hindu families in South Africa in the 1800s, to the eventual colonial standardising of how these families should look and feel. This standardisation process came with a reinscribing of patriarchal values into Hindu communities. This is not to say these moral codes were not there before, but that, in the absence of laws pertaining to marriage for example, women were not beholden to the same ‘respectable’ standards they were in the 1900s.

Differences between Hinduism in South Africa and India is a valuable, yet open-ended discussion that falls outside the focus and scope of this research, which is to understand how care operates in this specific site. However, this question is deeply tied to the definition of Hindu spirituality in South Africa. Lal and Vahed (2013) show, through way of explaining the role of two South Indian goddesses, Draupadi and Mariamman, the differences in Amman (Goddess) worship in South India and South Africa in the Tamil community.

> "Mariamman and Draupadi are South Indian goddesses who were widely worshipped in areas of South Africa where the majority of migrants were from South India. Most lower-caste Tamil-speaking Hindus in South India worship these two goddesses who play an important role in their daily lives. Worshippers walking on burning coals, animal sacrifices, and religious figures going into trance to heal the sick are all features of Hinduism among the working classes in Madras and vicinity (see Hiltebal 1988). In Natal, however, goddess worshippers (Sakti worshippers) blended various traditions so that subsidiary-deities of Mariammen, such as Munisvaran and Koterie, are often placed outside temples rather that Mariamman herself (Ganesh, 2010: 33)." (Lal and Vahed, 2013: 13)

The second point clarifies the syncretic nature of Hindu spirituality in South Africa in relation to the research and refines the scope of Hinduism important to this research. But, however syncretic the nature of Hinduism is in South African, Gopal et al (2014) notes how "unsurprisingly, notwithstanding the almost organic acculturation process that Hindus have undergone, they continue to draw upon Hindu teachings and practices emanating from India. India is perceived as the ultimate source of authority for religious practices and identity (Gopal et al, 2014: 28-29).

There are continuing debates about the diasporic nature of Hinduism in South Africa, but one salient point for the research is the interchange of priests to officiate ceremonies and events at South African temples. "At the turn of the twentieth century there were many Hindu religious leaders from the Indian subcontinent visiting South Africa and providing discourse on Hindu ideals, practices, customs, and traditions as practised in their native homeland" (Gopal et al, 2014: 32). At the fieldsite temple the priest is from India and has been overseeing spiritual matters for the last five years (Kistan, 2017: 2). His qualifications as a priest is what Kistan

(2017) said the temple favoured, rather than privileging his nationality. Chetty (1999) describes the interplay between India and South African understandings of Hinduism as constantly in flux, and analogous to the conflicts and contradictions in the expression of South African 'Indianness' and citizenship.

> "The identity of the South African Indian diaspora in the past, and today, exists in an uneasy state of tension between their identification with Indian and as South African citizens. This is given greater complexity due to South Africa's history of racial segregation and apartheid, where Indians were not considered citizens until South African became a republic." (Chetty, 1999: 69)

Despite unresolved issues about the shape and meaning of Hinduism in South Africa – it took on more permeance in its structures as more ex-indentured workers settled in South Africa. That permanence was found in the erection of temples, dotted through the sugarcane plantations at first, then throughout more urban areas – such as is seen by the Umgeni Road temple. The growing "Indian intelligentsia" (Chetty, 1999: 69) which developed around the beginning of the century, was a pivotal part in the formalisation of Hinduism in South Africa. Hindu temples being built in brick and mortar, as opposed to wattle and daub (less permanent structures) was an important step for South African Hindus to cement their place, settle and form families. Desai noted that "temples were a source of community bonding, drawing on ancient skills and providing the organisational backbone of Hinduism in Natal" (Desai, 2013: 66). As Desai (2013: 66) explains, temple culture is still very much a part of everyday Hindu life in Kwa-Zulu Natal. "Even on the sugar estates which Indians have long left, deep in the cane-fields, temples stand as a constant memory to a time when they played a central role in the lives of the indentured. Many of the festivals continue to be celebrated."

Temples, at their most fundamental level, are reminders of the type of life one should live if one is Hindu. The temple is also a site of indenture remembrance and reverence. Temples do not exist as merely architectural structures devoted to the worship of Hindu deities, but instead are spaces where particular norms and morals are espoused. Kuper (1960), writing on temple culture in Kwa-Zulu Natal during apartheid noted that:

> "Public temples are generally more colourful and more substantial than domestic temples in private gardens, and are conspicuous through their distinctive architecture (domes and minarets) derived from memories and pictures of traditional Indian styles. The main entrance […] consists of a porch, which especially in South Indian temples, there are generally *kavali* (guards) of the specific deities inside." (Kuper, 1960: 195)

Wealthier Hindu families prominent in communities where there is a temple-going population often form the backbone of financial support needed to build a temple. The division of labour in temple culture is here outlined by Kuper (1960). The property, she noted, is "controlled by 'trustees' who are generally men of good reputation in the district" (Kuper, 1960: 197).

> "For particular festivals, the trustees appoint 'temple committees' and since help in religious work is considered both to confer a privilege and bestow merit, there appear always to be people eager to perform the necessary tasks. A committee of women assists with temple collections of food and such ritual tasks such as making garlands for festivals." (Kuper, 1960: 197)

This, formalised version of Hinduism as practised in temple settings is not the only form that Hinduism has taken in diasporic Hindu spaces, such as South Africa and the Caribbean.

Vertovec (2000), speaking of the forms of Hinduism in the Caribbean, discussed a useful distinction between official and popular Hinduism.

> "They [these popular forms of Hinduism] have often been maintained in a rather clandestine and unformulated, often quite vague manner by a decreasing minority. They are usually directed toward therapeutic or protective ends, and include: beliefs and precautions regarding the evil eye […] the use of specific mantras and motions to cure various afflictions, talismans, specific acts to undo the work of malevolent forces or omens, exorcisms of ill-meaning spirits and offerings to minor deities." (Vertovec, 2000: 61)

As Chetty (1999) persuasively argues, backyard temples are viewed in a negative light by proponents of 'official' Hinduism, even though there is no clear-cut definition of what the primary differences are between the two. "The conventional view of 'backyard temples' is of place of witchcraft and superstition where people are charged exorbitant fees, often to engage in practices no necessarily sanctioned by 'official Hinduism'" (Chetty, 1999: 44).

> "The overall negative stereotype of "backyard" temples possibly arises from them providing an alternate form of Hinduism which people may find more suited their pragmatic needs, hence undermining and offering a potential challenge to the traditional authority of "official" Hinduism." (Chetty, 1999: 45)

This potential for subversion of patriarchal norms by 'unofficial' practices and understandings of Hinduisms is elaborated on by Diesel (2005) who explained that backyard temples are spaces were women come to "seek healing and advice for dealing with abusive husbands and other problems" (Diesel, 2005: 45) She continued, stating, "this women dominated aspect of Amman religion is extremely popular, so much so that it sometimes

appears to pose a threat to male temple leadership , some women having been dismissed as simply running 'backyard temple cults' (Diesel 1999a & b)" (Diesel, 2005: 45).

Intimate relationships between difficult times and spirituality is further elaborated on by Diesel (2005). When discussing the large Amman festival for Draupadi in Pietermaritzburg, she noted that:

> "Many of the descendants of South Indian indentured labourers have remained relatively economically depressed which causes considerable stress, frustration and anxiety[...] which results in physical and psychological illness. In that context, the entire worshipping community can be seen to experience a strong sense of solidarity and identity from their participation in the symbolic religious rituals with their powerful mythology." (Diesel, 2005: 44)

This speaks to earlier discussions by Herman (1997) and Manda about trauma and spirituality – the intimacies of care in the community that Diesel speaks of is the area within which my research is situated.

As discussions of spirituality and religion often veer into ambiguity and often resist strict codification, I have defined my research so that allows for more flexibility in understanding how individuals function in caring, communal relationships. This report in many ways is about the temple but is not bound by any institutional pressures, religious performativity or any trauma victim-shaming that may take place in the temple structures.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework and methodology

I had many questions around how to deal with the sensitivities of the research as it deals with experiences of domestic violence, spirituality and care – all of which are socially constructed as existing in the private realm, which as Vetten (2013) noted, is a space constructed as devoid of public scrutiny or academic inquiry. I have located this research in the realm of feminist theory – taking my lead from the scholarship I was awarded to undertake this study (Governing Intimacies project, funded by Mellon) and the topic at hand. However, there is no one way to do feminist theorising, and so it was important to explore various ways of seeing the power relations embedded in doing research.

> "While there may be consensus that feminist research in its many variations places women's diverse experiences, and the social institutions that frame those experiences, centre stage (Olesen, 2000 :216), debate centres not just on the methods used by feminist researchers, but on the aims of the research itself, the power relationships between researchers and the "researched", accountability and the potential of the research to create change for women." (Allen, 2010: 3)

An important scholar that helped me think through the theoretical framework of this research was Uma Narayan. Narayan's (1989) perspective as a "nonwestern feminist" (Narayan, 1989: 213) is important in understanding how various feminist epistemologies do differ – and how to fit certain methods, or tools, with certain methodologies.

Narayan defines feminist epistemology broadly as:

> "The efforts of many oppressed groups to reclaim for themselves the value of their own experience. These enterprises are analogous to feminist epistemology's project of restoring to women a sense of the richness of their history, to mitigate our tendency to

> see the stereotypically 'masculine' as better or more progressive, and to preserve for posterity the contents of 'feminine areas' of knowledge and expertise." (Narayan, 1989: 213)

She goes on to state: "A fundamental thesis of feminist epistemology is that our location in the world as women makes it possible for us to perceive and understand different aspects of both the world and human activities in ways that challenge male bias of existing perspectives" (Narayan, 1989: 213).

I shared many of Narayan's concerns with how she navigated the tensions of being "critical of how our culture and traditions oppress women" (Narayan, 1989: 216) and "our desire as members of once colonized cultures to affirm the value of the same cultures and traditions" (Narayan, 1989: 216), and I relate to her noting how "striking a balance" (Narayan, 1989: 216) between these issues causes conflict and complicates a unitary notion of a feminist epistemology.

Another element of Narayan's work in nonwestern feminist epistemologies is the issue of epistemic advantage, or perceived advantage, of being part of the dominated group and doing the research. She notes that the vantage point of being part of the dominated group – knowing the norms or values in oppressed communities does make it "easier and more likely for the oppressed to have critical insights into the conditions of their own oppression than it is for those who live outside these structures" (Narayan, 1989: 220).

Whilst devising a research question and wondering whether to do this research in Johannesburg or Verulam, I realised there would be epistemic advantages of me doing this

research in Verulam because of my family relationships there. I knew the type of South African Indian English (Mesthrie, 2010) to employ when interviewing older members of the community, and I lived with my grandmother, who helped me rework questions so that I could effectively communicate with research participants. She helped translate the ideas I had into layperson's terms, which helped balance unequal power dynamics due to educational level (many participants had matric qualifications at most), and any language barriers (sometimes participants spoke an informal, 'kitchen' Tamil).

Epistemic advantage, although helpful in some regards, does not neutralise the power imbalance between myself and the research participants. At some point in an interview, I felt my privileged position made clear in relation to the interviewee. She asked me why I wanted to include her voice in my research. During the course of the interview, we had gone through many parts of her life and about three-quarters of the way through – she said: "Wow, I feel so special to be interviewed, I'm telling you things I have never told anyone before" (Murugalakshmi, 2017: 6). I didn't know what to make of this – many of the women I had spoken to in the temple were confused and felt special because I focussed on them, but they didn't really know why. One woman came to me after a Sunday service at the temple and pointed out many men who were apparently more knowledgeable to interview.

There is no way to flatten the charged and sometimes tense nature of research – as Mupotsa (2007) noted, "'conducting research', as a means of accessing academic achievement is something which is done from a particular class position and the 'power-play' between 'researcher' and 'researched' persists and it must continue to be interrogated" (Mupotsa, 2007: xvi). My position was that of someone who inhabited the context – but this was complicated by the being within, but not entirely of, the environment. The 'shadow side' of

epistemic advantage, or "the disadvantages of being able to, or having to inhabit two mutually incompatible frameworks that provide differing perspectives on social reality" (Narayan, 1989: 221) made themselves clear over the course of my fieldwork visits. "The choice to inhabit two contexts critically is an alternative to these choices, and I would argue, a more useful one," (Narayan, 1989: 222), however, this comes at price that Narayan (1989) articulated well. The price is not feeling entirely rooted or not feeling "one is at home in a relaxed manner" (Narayan, 1989: 222). I agree that the synthesis is not a perfect one – and can produce harmful feelings in the researcher. When undertaking my fieldwork, I was acutely aware of being an insider/outsider. A person who lives in the borderlands – not quite a perfect representative of the academy, but not fully incorporated into the social reality of Verulam. Let me explain this further through an incident that happened, post-field work.

Before leaving to do field work, I contemplated dying my shaved black hair a different colour, but I didn't because I did not want to be controversial, offensive – or be 'raw, from Phoenix'[1], as my family members stated. However, on coming back to Johannesburg, I dyed my hair as I assessed that it wasn't an obstacle to doing my research and, honestly, I really wanted to dye my hair. So I went to do fieldwork in Verulam at a later stage with pink hair. During this second visit, I was meant to meet a member of the SSSA committee – an older woman, who knows my family. She had agreed to speak to me after a temple service, but on the day was nowhere to be found. I tried to make contact with her, to no avail. She offered no reason for her absence when she finally answered my calls. She was short on the phone – I felt like I offended her but didn't know why. I would find out the reason a few weeks later, when I was back in Johannesburg. I was on the phone with my grandmother and she said

[1] Phoenix is a large working-class Indian township outside Durban and is perceived to be 'rougher' than Verulam.

"Hey, you know Aunty X? When she didn't come to the temple service? I heard her saying that she didn't like your hair, she didn't want to talk to you […]"

I was shocked – after the first fieldwork visit, I thought perhaps the hair colour wouldn't affect the content or quality of work I could do in Verulam. But it did.

As Narayan (1989) noted, "feminist theory must be temperate in the use it makes of this doctrine of 'double vision' – the claim that oppressed groups have epistemic advantage and access greater conceptual space" (Narayan, 1989: 223). It was restricting to occupy a place neither here, nor there, when doing this research, but in certain ways, my epistemic advantages led to open access in the temple.

Besides the daunting task of condensing women's biographies I had to contend with the fact that I am a blood relation to some of the women, and that I will continue going to Verulam, going to the temple and see many of the participants. The ongoing-ness of the relationship – as well as the reasons I became interested in understanding the quiet, hidden interplay of care, Hinduism, domestic violence and indenture is because of who I am. From a positivist standpoint, this compromises my objectivity and neutrality in research – possibly compromising the entire endeavour. I nervously called my supervisor – wondering if family members (albeit extended) could be 'allowed' as research participants. My training in social science was thorough and I had internalised what a 'good subject' looked like – and what I assumed was the correct distance for a researcher to keep. With family there is little distance.

Throughout the course of my life, and times I had stayed in Verulam with my grandparents, I had observed the subtle and not-so-subtle ways patriarchal orders were reproduced in the temple setting – and ways in which abuse of all kinds was disguised or all together not

spoken of. I had experienced non-Indian people casually ask me if, in fact, abuse does happen in Indian families 'because your women are so submissive'. I found these erasures, and silences when reading literature about trauma, care, violence against women and healing in South Africa. I found gap and saw a place where I think work needed to be done. Not to save a life or change policy per say – but to creatively think about the ordinary lives of women who have survived domestic abuse in Verulam. The concept of intimacy and intimacies of care, clarifies my motivation. As Roseneil and Budgeon (2004) argue, the study of intimacies of care are important in an increasing individualised world. Studying intimacies deals with the "question of how people organise their personal lives, loving and caring for each other in contexts of social, cultural and economic change" (Roseneil and Budgeon, 2004: 135).

In tandem with unpacking the intimacies of care in this fieldsite is the drive to "excavate the "cultures of resistance" that give rise to a distinctive culture of gender identity" (Mullings, 2000: 28). This guiding principle is complex, especially if we bear in mind that resistance is not the framework that research participants use to explain their coping mechanisms and care practices. Abu-Lughod (1998), who wrote extensively about what it means to 'resist' in the context of women in Bedouin communities asks: "What is the ideological significance in academic discourse of projects that claim to bring light to the hitherto ignored or suppressed ways in which subordinated groups actively respond to and resist their situations?" (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 41). I do not want to "foreclose certain questions about the workings of power" (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 42) by romaticising resistance – or even terming certain actions, behaviours or attitudes as resistant or defiant against patriarchal orders, unless so inferred or stated by research participants. Methodologically, I take a leaf out of Lughod's work by using resistance as a "diagnostic of power" (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 42). This reframing of resistance – or strategic use – of unpicking resistance to understand the ebb and flow of power, will make

sure that in this research I am not simply "searching for resistors" (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 41) or engaging in a "reductionist theory of power" (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 53).

This move is taken from Foucault's work into power and subject formation. Although Foucault has been critiqued from the standpoint of feminists for not including gender as unit or mode of analysis, and erasing the power structural patriarchy plays in subject formation (Mupotsa, 2007), his work remains relevant. As feminist theorists like Mupotsa (2007) and Abu-Lughod (1998) have argued, Foucauldian discourse provides one productive way of analysing the generative, complex relations of power that constitute subjects.

Mupotsa (2007: xix) notes:

> "Foucault's offering of power as fluid (that is: not just from the top down) and complex allows me to offer what I believe is a 'better' feminist analysis; one that does not contribute to a dominant discourse of black women [and I would argue Indian domestic violence survivors] as the perpetual 'beasts of burden', incapable of action or agency in the face of multiple oppressions."

These were the most pressing challenges to the research. When thinking through which methodology would prove most productive to the research aims, my own position and my relation to the communities I engaged with, there are many different options. However, I will elaborate on standpoint and grounded theory, as I found these as the most applicable to the research.

Standpoint, as defined by Haraway (1997:304) is the "cognitive-emotional-political achievements, crafted out of located social-historical-bodily experience– itself always constituted through fraught, non-innocent, discursive, material collective practices". The

different points people view certain experiences from then informs their understanding of experiences and knowledge. Standpoint theory is seen as a reaction to the "detached and analytically orientated approach to science and the production of knowledge" (Allen, 2010: 7), however, feminism does not come from one position. Collins and hooks are some of the primary workers in crafting Black women or Black feminist standpoints. There are indigenous women's standpoints. And intersectional feminist methodology would accommodate difference and complexity in a seemingly fixed standpoint (Crenshaw, Cho, McCall, 2013). This accommodation and acknowledgement of difference is important to note in relation to feminist standpoint theory.

Some critiques of standpoint note how essentialism can be a problem – where a researcher replicates an othering process through research methodology or design, as well as reducing women's diverse experience, histories and social conditions to homogeneous interpretations through research. This discussion cannot be complete without mention of how dominated groups have been pathologised – groups such as domestic violence survivors, 'temple aunties' – and how by choosing, for example, to be aligned with feminist standpoint theory, I could reproduce essentialised ideas about the participant's social reality. As Smart (2009: 297) suggests, "feminist research must take risks again by finding ways to connect with the people who contribute to the research process and finding ways to present complex layers of cultural and social life" (Allen,2010: 7). One of these risks is acknowledging there is no unitary methodology or tool of feminist theorising, however "standpoint theories and postmodern influences can provide both a 'gender lens' to guide the choice of methodology." (Allen, 2010: 7)

Grounded theory allows for more flexibility in understanding the multiplicity of abused women's experiences and care-giver's experiences. Allen (2010), in trying to devise a suitable methodology for work in the same type of feminist research with domestic abuse survivors in Northern Ireland, noted how "at its simplest, grounded theory can be described as a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data which is gathered and analysed in a systematic fashion (Strauss and Corbin 1998:158)" (Allen, 2010: 9).

Allen's (2010) use of Charmaz (2005) constructivist grounded theory was helpful scaffolding for this research design. Constructivist Grounded Theory is defined using these three points:

> "(a) Grounded theory strategies need not be rigid or prescriptive;
>
> (b) A focus on meaning while using grounded theory furthers, rather than limits, interpretive understanding:
>
> (c)We can adopt grounded theory strategies without embracing the positivist leanings of earlier proponents of grounded theory. (Charmaz, 2003:251)" (Allen, 2010: 10)

As Allen (2010) notes, these points locate the theory as flexible enough to encompass diversity of experiences and is situated as a halfway point between "positivism and postpositivism" (Allen, 2010: 10) and "suggests that the analysis and theory building which would flow from a study into women's experiences of abuse could take account of both the structural aspects of women's lives which influence their freedom of action and their individual constructions of meaning and individual responses to this abuse" (Allen, 2010: 10).

I entered into this research assuming there would be answers to the research questions posed – but quickly realised that there is no unitary 'answer' or formula to abused women's paths of healing or recovery (Herman, 1992). Allen (2010) explained this methodological shift further when she, quoting Clarke (2005) noted there is "problematic pretense" (Clarke, 2005:12) in mainstream forms of grounded theory. This pretense is based on the idea of entering research with a "blank mind" (Allen, 2010: 19) but "on the contrary that researchers come to their work 'already infected' by the insights and findings of previous research" (Allen, 2010: 19). I came to realise what I was researching was non-linear and often circular processes – replete with false endings and forms of non-closure (Herman, 1992). However, this does not mean that the research is without value or meaning – it is productive to understand how the questions posed do not preclude an answer in a positivist framework, thus, the constructivist grounded theory is a beneficial framework to use to understand the 'how' questions of care, spirituality and abuse.

This methodology synthesises existing theories and I believe it to be useful towards the ultimate goal of trying to understand the circuits of care in the fieldsite temple – and what women's experiences of spiritual comfort are – without limiting this knowledge to strict parameters of academic interpretation. The methodological approach I take is informed by the multiplicity of human identity and experience, complexities within the relationship between researcher and research subject and how I synthesis and interpret these experiences.

Methods

In this research I made the conscious decision to highlight family and "the private and personal as worthy of study (Letherby, 2003:73)" (Allen, 2010). As Chandru Kistan, one of the senior members of the temple committee solemnly said to me – the SSSA has not been

the site of serious academic inquiry before, and so I should be honoured to have access to the space. The use of particular research tools does not increase or decrease how 'feminist' research is – rather, it is how those tools have been used. Wambui (2013) reiterates what many feminist theorists have stated (Letherby, 2003; Miner-Rubino & Jayaratne, 2007) – namely that "both quantitative and qualitative research methods are useful in feminist research and that the choice of method should depend on the research questions and objectives, rather than on which method is considered to be most feminist" (Wambui, 2013: 4).

This research is qualitative and humans were interviewed for research purposes. In total, I interviewed two research participants (survivors of domestic violence who worship at the Shri Subramaniar Alayam), and then conducted interviews with three members of the temple committee as part of understanding the context of care work in the temple. Of these interviews, one family member was a survivor of domestic violence and another was on the temple committee. As Mullings (2000: 28) asserted, choosing one method is not the endpoint for the researcher and "'giving voice is not enough'. Research practices must help to reveal the hidden structures of oppression – the power and resource differentials arising from class, race and gender hierarchies." I interviewed family members, invoked the memories of passed on family members and ancestors and situated myself in the long line of Appasamys that lived in Verulam. To some people, I was known as the butcher shop's granddaughter (my grandfather on my mother's side owned a successful butchershop for years in Verulam), others knew me as Logan's daughter – who in turn was known as Appasamy's son. The 'Appasamy' in question was my grandfather on my father's side who was chairperson of the SSSA in the 1970s.

During one of the first Sunday temple services at the SSSA, I was the guest speaker for the service and was allocated ten minutes to introduce myself and my research. I followed a pattern, which seemed to work well, was non-confrontational and simple to understand. I started by talking about care, and that I would like to understand how care works in the temple setting. I then focussed on Hinduism and how I am interested in this religion. I often used my family history to contextualise myself in the space and in a way, relied on the past work of my grandparents in the temple to imply that I mean no harm to the temple community. After that first introduction, a few women came to speak to me afterwards, and asked for my number. From the three women who seemed interested in taking part in the research, only one ended up getting back to me. Other participants were sourced through family connections. In total I used two interviews with abuse survivors and three secondary interviews with temple committee members.

I used the "episodic narrative interview" (Allen, 2010: 15) which was developed by Flick (2000, 2006). The interviews started with background knowledge of the subject – a short life biography. "Special attention is paid in the interview to situations or episodes in which the interviewee has had experiences that seem to be relevant to the question of the study (Flick, 2006:182)" (Allen, 2010: 15). In these interviews I heard how women themselves make sense of their experiences and how they choose to express their relationship within spirituality to someone of; but not within; the community. I asked questions starting from easier ones – such as talking about the temple, into more difficult and sensitive questions about care, abuse and spirituality.

> "Feminists have consistently emphasized the importance of social context, insisting that feminist methods should be contextual – that is, avoid focusing on the individual

> in isolation, cut off from interactions and relationships with other people." (Wambui, 2013: 1)

Community participation and immersive observation are tools that I employed in the study. "Community participation in research is very important in addressing some of the critiques of ethnographies (re-inscribing a dichotomy of powerful and powerless in research) and multiple claims to the truth undermining the agency of the researched subjects resistance" (Mullings, 2000: 26). Through immersing myself in temple life in Verulam I got people to familiarise themselves with my research. On speaking of her research in Gugulethu with young women, Mupotsa (2007) noted that "there is no easier way to do social research than to approach it as a conversation with your friends" (Mupotsa, 2007: xii). Similarly, I found, after multiple stays in Verulam, there is no better way to craft research and gather information than gossiping after temple with congregants, casual or impromptu visits to friends of family and generally showing an interest in temple life. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), in Allen (2010) describe these ways of the researcher making-meaning as participatory action research, which "at its core, it is an approach to research which seeks to understand what people do, how they interact with their world, what they value, what it is they mean and what are the discourses by which they interpret their world" (Allen, 2010: 22). Altorki (1998), speaking on "studying her own community" (Altorki, 1998: 29) noted that:

> "Living at home meant that I had to assume the role expected of a family member in my position within the household group. The ordinary field situation reversed itself in my case. I became what may best be described as an observant participant. My primary duty was to participate. To observe became an incidental privilege." (Altorki, 1998: 31)

I lived with my grandmother when undertaking fieldwork – and my participation in community life was mandatory.

The analysis, or interpretation of the data is another part that a feminist researcher needs to think about carefully. The question is not whether there are power differences between who is researched and who is the researcher, but rather, how those differentials come to be (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006). It is important to think about voice, and how the research tools used lend themselves to how voice is projected, interpreted and packaged for the academy. As Wambui (2013: 3) explained, "the 'voices' of respondents do not speak on their own (Reinharz, 1992)."

The ways that data is synthesised is pivotal as "the merging of several narratives, in order to find a composite pattern which illuminates the meanings of these narratives" takes place (Allen, 2010: 16). It is in this movement where narratives, by necessity, have to be condensed and shown to be generalisable, or engage with pre-existing theory. However, this process does not mean that individual lived experiences are reduced into tropes, or that the participant's voice is packaged in a way that is tidy for the academy, but does not speak to the feelings and thoughts of those outside of it, or does not speak to the feelings and thoughts I had when undertaking and producing the research. The "creative process" (Allen, 2010: 16) of interpreting data involves the construction of codes, and is essentially a self-reflexive task (Allen, 2010). As much as I could do, the participants were "co-authors at a distance and in anonymity" (Allen, 2010: 21).

Boundaries of research

When crafting the research design of the project, the sample size and whether the research could be generalisable was of concern. The fieldwork took place in one year and required travelling, within the constraints of the university timetable and my coursework and classes. This research was bound by short time constraints, as this is a product of a one-year MA.

This is a small-scale study, and as such, the possibility to find or attach the research to trends in South African discourse about care and domestic violence is lower than a larger-scale study. Due to the methodology used, as well as the theoretical grounding for that theory, the data focuses on the diversity of experience, rather than a trend of experiences for a large number of women.

An "indigenous researcher" (Altorki, 1998: 34) also deals with the shadow side of epistemic advantage, as Narayan (1989) discussed. This aspect to my research did limit the work that was done as the expectations of the community of my role as a researcher made it "more difficult for [me] to break out of fixed patterns" (Altorki, 1998: 34) of my class, gender and ethno-religious identity.

> "The role that the community attributes to the researcher may inhibit other relationships and bias the researcher's thoughts. Moreover, the role ascribed by kinship to the indigenous anthropologist may forcefully draw that person into factionalism within the community and thereby limit the work that can be accomplished." (Altorki, 1998: 34)

In my case, the very public relationship to the work and lives of my parents and grandparents in Verulam, may have been some form of a limitation, although not quantifiable. I attempted, at every turn, to offer a comfortable and flexible approach to fieldwork and accessing sources, but the Appasamy link may have turned people away from participating in the study. Altorki (1998) quoting Stephenson and Greer (1981) explained that this can be negated "by a conscious strategy. The researcher can mitigate the effects of already established roles by emphasizing some over others" (1981:127)" (Altorki, 1998: 34).

Chapter 4: Ethical Considerations

The methodology of the project cannot be divorced from the ethical considerations – as noted, for the indigenous researcher the stakes are somewhat different that a researcher doing work in areas unknown, or external to their upbringing, home and/or family. I know, because I will be visiting and living in Verulam for years to come, that I will be continually accountable to the people I've interviewed and the temple congregation. This kind of pressure is not one that was necessarily foregrounded in the beginning of research, but as I returned to Verulam, it dawned on me that this is not a project where the researcher can fade into the distance. My embeddedness in the community and connections to people in Verulam is long lasting. Mama (2011) articulates this struggle well, by noting:

> "Connections to the communities also engender responsibilities that surface questions of reciprocity and social obligation that also vary from one location to another, requiring a degree of sensitivity and tact that may elude the casual investigator." (Mama, 2011: 17)

A recurring fear that participants felt was whether the study is anonymous. Even after handing our participant information sheets and explaining verbally that the study will be anonymous, people asked that question. Anonymity is a very important aspect of the interviewing process, as well as informal conversations had that I stated I wanted to use in some form in the research. Only two participants, who currently serve on the temple trustee board (Moodley and Kistan) are named because they felt comfortable doing so, and the other participants are anonymous and pseudonyms are used. Interviews were recorded to remain as true to what is said as possible, and all participants knew and consented to the recording. Consent is key and throughout talking and interviewing participants I made that clear. The

temple itself will not be anonymous – so that the history of the institution and its current understandings and practices of care can be aired publicly.

Having interviewed domestic violence survivors, I realised that the interviews could have been triggering for myself and participants, and there were many ethical considerations to be made as a researcher.

> "The major ethical concern in studies on violence against women is related to the principle of non-malfeasance or minimizing the harm. This principle is related to the fact that respondents who participate in the study are more likely than others to suffer physical harm if their partners find out the aim of the study." (Kelmendi, 2013: 564)

As mentioned in the Methods section, I used the episodic narrative interview as the primary way of soliciting information from research participants. The way the question list, and the actual questions asked were structured is to leave the most potentially triggering questions for later on in the interview. The list of questions did not include asking participants to re-live or recount traumatic experiences, unless they choose to do so. Similarly, questions about the perpetrators of trauma weren't asked, but what I found to be the case was that interviewees referred to their partners, as their partners had passed away years ago. Questions fell within the realm of healing, care and spirituality.

> "Telling the story of violence is considered a transforming experience for the women, since they did not have an opportunity to talk about it before (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005:43). Another aspect of beneficence relates to methodological considerations that maximize disclosure, including: specific wording and templates for questions; interviewers' sex; attitude; skills; empathy and trust." (Kelmendi, 2013: 564)

The interviews took place in spaces familiar to participants to ensure they were comfortable. I offered an easy-to-navigate form with contact details of people and organisations that help

domestic abuse survivors with support, if participants felt alone and were looking for help. This form didn't help much, and the people I spoke to didn't see the point of counselling or any therapeutic activities in a psychology framework. As of writing the thesis, I am not aware of any participants who used this form.

All data collected during the research will be destroyed after 3 years, and any intellectual projects arising from fieldwork will only be done after getting consent from participants for thee projects. Ultimately, the ethical considerations were multiple, and these concerns took up a lot of space in my mind. This statement acted as the guiding principle for how I went about doing this research in an ethical and respectful manner.

> "Ethical responsibilities concerning research practices, protection of informants, disposition of data, and framing of results must go beyond the codes of ethics practised by most reasonable disciplines. These considerations become particularly important in the case of a population that has limited access to control over how knowledge is presented and represented." (Mullings, 2000: 28)

Chapter 5: A monument to the Forefathers

> "The temple stands as a monument to the culture, religious faith, labour of love and self-help of industrious and humble pioneers who drew inspiration from their place of worship. Their devotion clearly demonstrated their genuine desire to work selflessly towards the spiritual and ethical upliftment of the community. In a society that is presently plagued by crime, violence and marked decline in moral values, the need for love, tolerance and compassion is greater now than ever before." (SSSA Brochure, 2003)

The story of how the SSSA came into being, as well as how memories of indenture set the norms of care and how the social is constructed is important. The 118-year-old temple originally stood on land donated by a free Indian person called Doobur. Spatially, it takes up residence on a bend in the Mdloti River, right next to the R102 the main artery to and from King Shaka International Airport. There is free flowing access to the riverbank from temple, which is important for the temple's biggest festival celebration Kavady (Shashnee interview, 2017).

The temple has undergone significant physical change – initially the temple was constructed of wood, corrugated iron and wattle daub. This was then changed to materials that created a more permanent structure – bricks, concrete and stone (SSSA Brochure, 2000). In 1976, floods again destroyed the building "where many valuable documents were lost" (Moodley interview, 2017: 1). Centenary Hall was built in 1980 after years of and trying to get enough money for building. The idea, formulated by the temple committee in 1958, was to have a hall for weddings, funerals and other social engagements and after years of stop-start building due to a lack of – the hall came into being.

> "Over the façade of the Hall was to be engraved in concrete an indentured Indian cane cutter dressed in dhoti on one side. On the other side there was to be a young Indian female graduate dressed in graduation garb (mortar and gown), indicating the progress made by South African Indians over 100 years. On the top was to be the words INDIAN CENTENARY HALL 1860-1960." (SSSA Centenary Brochure, 2000)

The Navagraha Shrine is the most recent addition, only being completed in 1994 (Moodley interview, 2017: 1).

Paying "homage to our forefathers" (SSSA Centenary Brochure, 2000) is one of the primary reasons that is cited by the temple management in maintaining the temple infrastructure, and importantly, the temple is not only a religious symbol, but caters to "cultural needs of the community" (SSSA Centenary Brochure, 2000). This framing of the temple and its function bears relevance to the next sections.

Taking my lead from Mahmood's (2011) discussion of norms, as they relate to her research about the piety movement in Egypt, we have the following formulation of norms: "Norms are not simply a social imposition on the subject but constitute the very substance of her intimate, valorised interiority" (Mahmood, 2011: 23). Norms, according to Mahmood (2011: 23), are "lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated" in a number of ways. An institution, such as the temple, is implicated in setting the norms, ethics and morals – if not for Verulam in its entirety – but for temple congregation. Hinduism, as Anderson (2012: 25) notes was not merely "a realm of belief or practice separate from the rest of existence but permeated it as the ubiquitous texture of popular life." As discussed in chapter 2 temple

building formed a vital part of "connecting the past to the present" (Desai, 2013: 65), and the informal and non-permanent ways the indentured navigated South Africa were steadily formalised by colonial authorities who instituted certain laws governing marriage, and by the indentured themselves, who built temples and homes in permanent structures.

What kinds of norms were espoused by the "Indian intelligensia" (Chetty, 1999: 69) who were at the forefront of building up "temple Hinduism" (Lal and Vahed, 2013:3)? According to Desai and Vahed (2010) patriarchal norms were re-inscribed in the making of the respectable Indian family – the people who may have been part of the class that built temples and propagated temple Hinduism. One example raised by Murugalakshmi, one of the research participants, was particularly telling of how what is seen as a norm in temple behaviour is rooted in patriarchal practices transplanted from Hinduism as practised in India.

Murugalakshmi started her interview with a story about blood – menstrual blood – and how this experience shaped how she understood her role, as a woman, in the temple. When she started her period, her grandmother told her father that she felt ill, and so couldn't go to the temple. "So my *Paatti* [father's mother] will tell my father '*Murugalakshmi avaḷ naṉṟāka uṇarkiṟāḷ*. She telling 'Murugalakshmi can't come today. She's not feeling well.' He must catch on that I got my period and that I can't go to the temple" (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 3). But her father insisted that she went to temple – and indeed she wanted to, so she followed his instruction. "He said, 'Why can't she come to the temple? God created it. She must have a bath and she must come.' I went. Today I'm telling the story only – if those ladies know they would kick me out today too […] it's sin to go." (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 3).

Kuper (1960: 160) notes:

> "While menstruation inaugurates an honoured and desirable potential status, the condition itself involves restrictions on normal behaviour; from participating in ritual activities including lighting of house prayer lamp or entry into the temple. There is as it were a public pronouncement of her condition but negative injunctions."

As much as there are negative pronouncements on menstruation, it also functions as a marker of womanhood. "Menstruation, motherhood and menopause become the triumvirate to prove the divinely ascribed roles of women" (Mitchem, 2013: 99). Prohibition of menstruating individuals to the temple when they are on their period is, according to Chetty (1999) one of the "elements of patriarchy in Hinduism" (Chetty, 1999: 43). It has "become accepted as common-sense" (Chetty, 1999: 43) and as Murugalakshmi says – although she notes the stigma of dirtiness with menstruation has lessened, "they would kick [her] out" (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 3) even today.

Menstruation and uncleanliness are some of the main reasons stated by mainly male temple committee members as to why women should not be allowed to handle more sacred and heavier responsibilities in the temple (Chetty, 1999). As was demonstrated, understandings of caste identity shifted in the Tamil indentured population – but the "negative injunctions" (Kuper, 1960: 160) pronounced on menstruation did not. So if, as was previously stated, the temple relies on the norms and values espoused by indentured labourers – what do these values look and feel like, in specific reference to who cares, for whom and how?

Care practices in the temple

Contact time for most temple congregants happens during the weekly Sunday temple service. This service starts at 8:00am and runs for an hour. The Sunday Prayer Service Group, as it is

formally referred to, was set up in October 1953 by D.V. Moodley (Senior), assisted by "stalwarts" (SSSA Golden Anniversary Brochure, 2003) V. Govindasamy, P. Subrayen, M.N. Naidu and N.S. Nandan. In the hour, people can expect to sing hymns, prayer to the *murtis* [religious statues] in the temple, walk around the temple, be blessed by the priest, and take part in a healing meditation. Participation, and being seen at the Sunday Service are important markers of social standing, and morality in the community, and "singing of hymns helps to generate vibrations that revitalise members of the congregation, uplifting them spiritually and granting them peace and tranquillity" (SSSA Golden Anniversary Brochure, 2003). The prayer group are also available to sing hymns at funeral and memorial services (SSSA Golden Anniversary Brochure, 2003).

Chandru Kistan, who was previously chairperson of the temple committee, and is now is one of five trustee members, said that "an essential part of the programme is the healing meditation session. Devotees during the meditation session close their eyes and go into deep meditation, relaxing their body and mind and taking themselves away from the world outside to the very centre of our being, focussing on the murtis and the lighting of lamps in the temple" (Kistan, 2017: 1).

N.S Nandan, mentioned earlier, was spiritual head at the time the meditation practices were incorporated into the temple service. He designed it into the Sunday Service programme and this, Kistan (2017) said, allows members to "thank God for their well-being and also pray for the recovery of all members in our community who are sick, frail and lonely" (Kistan interview, 2017: 2). Kistan explained how these organisations work in relation to the services the temple provides to the community, stating: "Our temple offers free spiritual assistance and voluntary service to all our organisations in Verulam and its surrounding areas. Our

priest, at the request of these organisations, offer spiritual help to the terminally ill and very sick patients and their families" (Kistan interview, 2017: 2).

Several of temple management members serve the boards of welfare organisations in Verulam. Kistan, for example, serves as the chairperson of the Verulam Hospice, as a volunteer.

> "Over ten members of our management committee are volunteers and organise support group sessions and activities for the cancer patients and are involved in organising fundraising events." (Kistan interview, 2017: 2)

The Blind and Deaf Society takes care of the blind and deaf in Verulam and the chairperson of this organisation is the vice-chairperson of the SSSA. "The temple premises are offered free of charge for these blind and deaf people to do their craft, knitting, sewing and beadwork on a weekly basis" (Kistan interview, 2017: 3).

'They knew the problems I had'

When asked directly about the care work offered by the temple to abused women, Kistan responded saying that the priest does call-outs offering counselling to members and that "we are very discreet and sensitive to these ills that confront our community" (Kistan interview, 2017: 3).

> "Our priest usually advised families to conduct certain prayers at our temple under his guidance and blesses them. Senior members of the temple call at homes and very caringly provide counselling and advice to the family members." (Kistan interview, 2017:3)

This was supported by G.K Moodley, another temple trustee, who noted that "temple work is community work, you know" (Moodley interview, 2017: 1). In situations where congregants

have expressed abuse at home, or with partners (regardless of whether the other individuals attend temple service), a specific member, "someone who is neutral and sympathetic and won't frighten anyone" will be sent to the house (Moodley interview, 2017: 1).

However, not every temple committee member or trustee agrees with this way of intervening in situations of family, or intimate partner violence. A member of the temple committee, Shashnee, said that "those things don't work" (Shashnee interview, 2017: 4).

> "We use to do that but we try not to because before you step out of this house, you must know that your own house is in harmony. You cannot have problems in your house and go sort someone else's problems out. I discourage that because there's so many issues people have there but [...] it doesn't work." (Shashnee interview, 2017: 4)

Shashnee believes that the priest, who offers personalised, one-on-one interactions with "low morality people" (Shashnee interview, 2017: 4) is the answer to caring for abused women in the community. She notes that low morality people are "depressed, abused and all of that" (Shashnee interview, 2017: 4).

> "So they [the priests] don't have the powers of getting people employment but it depends on the *karma* of the person. That plays a very important role, you are what you are because of your *karmic* level right? So, everybody has their different stations in life. You can't help that." (Shashnee interview, 2017: 4)

What I believe Shashnee is alluding to is justifying certain 'bad luck', or trauma, by stating that it is simply some people's lot in life to endure certain hardships. Karma, as Ganga (1994) explains, is the basis for "explanations regarding human conduct and situations. Karma thus introduces the idea of causality, retribution or a strict moral law [in Hinduism]" (Ganga, 1994: 19). This form of victim-shaming is naturalised as the moral order of the temple, in Shashnee's view. She then stated that all that the temple should do is facilitate Kavady or

Navaratri. She also pointed to other care-based, social institutions such as the Verulam Day Care Center as the "correct place" (Shashnee interview, 2017: 4) to seek help and care.

Chirkut's (2006) work into the cultural identity of working class women during Navaratri read in tandem with Shashnee's response raises more questions about whose version of indentured labourers' values are re-inscribed and protected by the temple. "In many Hindu families, roles and responsibilities are gender-based. Because of this, many women in the study believe that their forebears' institutionalised gender roles and they see their expression in Navaratri as a way of maintaining their cultural identity" (Chirkut, 2006: 30). The link between a cultural identity of Tamil Hindus and patriarchal norms which are privileged in this value system lead to the types of non-confrontation of a 'social ill' that everyone knows about – domestic violence.

When interviewing Murugalakshmi and Rajeshwari, survivors of domestic violence, both were wary of saying anything that could negatively implicate the temple, even though they knew they would be anonymous in this research. But, both women gave reasons for feeling responsible in supporting themselves instead of relying on, or expecting the temple congregation or committee members to intervene in their situations. Murugalakshmi (2017: 4) put it this way: "I think they were too frightened to come and meet my husband and all. He was violent – drinking and all. They wouldn't want to come near a person like that. They knew about him. They knew the problems I had."

Rajeshwari said her family, especially her children, were the most caring and helpful during difficult times when her husband was alive, as well as when he had passed on. "We were married for 26 years. We had a good life with the children but that's the only thing I had, the

children. Nothing other than that." (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 2). Rajeswari noted that the temple is good for doing big festivals and bringing people together, but that "the person is left over" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 2). "When bad luck happens, they do the planet prayer. No matter what, it's just between you and God. You can go anywhere – pray at home or the temple – it's how you relate and how you handle it. It's just us and God" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 2).

It's clear to Rajeshwari that her personal relationship to God, and not temple Hinduism, was what she relied on for spiritual nurturing. Mitchem (2013) sums up my thoughts on the disjunction between what the temple committee states as their stance, and how Murugalakshmi and Rajeshwari (who have worshipped at this temple since childhood) expressed the temple's stance towards them as abuse survivors.

> "Organized religions are social institutions that order the lives of their members according to beliefs accepted in their specific theology and traditions. In itself, such structuring is not a bad thing; what is often a difficulty is religions' inability to turn their institutional ships toward those social structures that increase social justice and human rights." (Mitchem, 2013: 9)

The temple structures purport to offer care to people in abusive households. Whether it be through the priest counselling members, or members taking part in festivals such as Kavady and Navaratri, the temple management stated that the most vulnerable in the community will receive care through the temple structures. However, asking questions directly about this category of vulnerable person, the temple management never answered the questions straightforwardly and usually needed more context – in which case they diverted the answer to other trauma survivors (terminally ill, physical disabilities, elder care, car crash survivors).

This leads me to think that these 'private' sphere issues, are still relegated there. Shashnee invoked the idea of the temple being a home during our interview – and in this home, women abuse survivors aren't the primary referents of care. Or, if they are – this is not openly spoken about.

The temple is a masculinised site of institutionalised religion (Chetty, 1999; Mitchem, 2013), possibly alienating to the extent that women would find alternative spaces of care receiving and giving. Indeed, my work seeks to explore how women navigate that space and how the relations of care work within that setting. The effects of patriarchy are not totalising in this temple setting and to discard the temple as a site of research is to discard the care-based work that is done through the lens of Hindu spirituality – whether supported by the temple institution or not. The temple is one of the oldest in the region and after consulting the historical archives in Verulam, it shows how memories of indentured labour shaped its significance to the community, who commonly come from ex-indentured families from the surrounding sugar cane plantations. The patriarchal norms that 'stabilised' the Indian family unit, standardised Hinduism into a respectable religion (Lal and Vahed, 2013; Desai and Vahed, 2010) have not been dispensed with, or shifted to create a place where care is dispensed to all, for all. The institutional affiliations with senior temple members to "noble bodies" (Kistan, 2017: 3) that deal with physical illness and disability demonstrate some privileging of certain types of vulnerable people above others.

Chapter 6: 'How did I survive those years?'

One of the aims of this research is to explore the ways that abused women have experienced nurturing and care on their recovery journeys through engaging with Hinduism on a personal level. This spiritual praxis will be discussed in depth in this chapter.

Before looking at the ways in which Murugalakshmi and Rajeshwari took care of themselves and engaged with their own spiritual practices for their recovery, it is important to understand how their relationship with the temple came about. Rajeshwari is in her 60s and has grown up in Verulam – worshipping at the Drift temple since she was "about 7 or 8" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 1). For Rajeshwari, her childhood enthusiasm and parents worshipping at the temple were important in forging a relationship at the SSSA. "It was just a small temple but it was so beautiful. That time we use to sit on the floor and all that and it was a small group of people and they use to sing and everything. Like when we were children, like for us it was like an amusement" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 1).

Rajeshwari use to go often to the temple before she was married, at age 18. "Every Sunday we used to go. After I got married I didn't go for a while. But then [after the accident] I started going again. In 1990 or so again I started going to the temple." (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 2).

> "Because of your life partner, your life changes. But he didn't allow me to go to the temple like often […] I never went out in fact. I was just home, with the children and [it] was the only thing he wanted. It wasn't so nice. Your whole personality changes, my whole personality changed for that time." (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 3)

She says during the time of her marriage, before the car accident that claimed the life of her husband, she was "outgoing and loved wearing lipstick and after marriage you know it changed me. I became like an introvert. I'm telling you honestly […] Before that I used to be so bubbly, it was so different. It changed my whole perspective in life. Now it's so difficult to change back to how I was […] you can't man, it's so hard" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 3). This behaviour is reminiscent of one definition of intimate partner violence, a concept twinned to domestic violence, which states that intimate partner violence constitutes four different forms. In one form, "*intimate terrorism* – the individual is violent and controlling while the partner is not" (Simkins, 2013: 1). Rajeshwari explained that her marriage was one of love, but that her partner ended up dominating her and she had "nothing" herself.

> "If I could, I would go back in time and then go study further. I would have my own things, my own career and everything […] Love is just something that dominates you. Once you fall in love you are dead [...] If you're dependent like I was, you have to listen to the men. It's like you have no right [to not listen to them]. You have nothing yourself." (Rajeshwari, 2017: 4)

Murugalakshmi is 80-years-old and has been going to the temple for the past 60 years, if not longer. She made it clear throughout the interview that her memory doesn't serve her as well as it used to. But, I felt this was couched in terms that negated her agency in remembering things – she kept on saying I should speak to the men of the temple, to verify things. So, although I acknowledge that her retellings of events may not have occurred exactly as stated, I still find value in her thoughts and feelings. Murugalakshmi's story differs to Rajeshwari's – she said she went to temple and "never gave up" (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 5) except when she was in hospital and couldn't walk. After a violent experience, where she had to jump out of a window to escape her husband who threatened to burn her with a paraffin

stove, she was unable to attend temple services for seven weeks as she was in hospital with a pelvic fracture. Where Rajeshwari felt controlled, manipulated and verbally abused, Murugalakshmi endured physical abuse throughout her marriage up until her spouse died. The naturalised patriarchal order in the family, as well as using violence as a means of control in the relationship are linked to the rates of intimate partner violence amongst indentured (Vahed and Desai, 2013; Singh, 2013). Although I find it important to understand the historical links of family violence, I don't think that that's the entire story – domestic violence is multi-causal and for people at various intersections of privilege and oppressions, these reasons will differ.

One reason, that both women hinted at, but never explicitly stated, was that their husbands stopped them from earning money independently from them, and this played a role in their dependency on their spouse. Both women are working class, and did not finish matric, but they had aspirations as a dress-maker (Murugalakshmi) and teacher or lawyer (Rajeshwari). A story Murugalakshmi told me was particularly insightful to the dynamic if economic dependency in an abusive marriage. She had come home one day to find her husband had come home early from work, was drunk and had destroyed all the clothes she tailored for her customers. She had a small, informal dress-making business but after this experience, she was disheartened and didn't pick it up again. Rajeshwari wanted to study towards a teaching diploma and teach English, as her mother did, but her husband didn't want her to leave the house – so she never attained her diploma.

Although anecdotal, this points to some of the theories regarding domestic violence. Josephson (2010) noted, using research undertaken in the United States by Browne, Salomon and Bassuk (1999) that "some male partners who are abusive engage in behaviour intended to

sabotage women's efforts to become self-sufficient through work or participation in work training and education programs (Raphael, 1996)" (Josephson, 2010: 94). In South Africa, Vetten (2013) notes that "it is a truism that many abused women are economically dependent on their abusive partners and that this structural dependency serves to entrap them within abusive relationships." She points to a micro-financing initiative called the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDs and Gender Equity, which demonstrated ways in which women's economic participation can be protected. "This demonstrated a 55% reduction in domestic violence through a programme combining microfinance with gender and HIV training (Pronyk et al, 2006)" (Vetten, 2013: 125) but has not been formulated into policy or programmes addressing gender-based violence or domestic violence.

Through understanding how Murugalakshmi and Rajeshwari navigated the temple space and what their relationships to the temple was, the context is set for how they sought ways to connect to God after experiencing 'bad luck'. Both women attest to the fact that the temple was "peaceful" (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 1) and a "divine" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 1) space where they felt at ease – but not one where they could openly seek guidance, care and support during their abusive marriages. In the previous chapter I made the argument that the norms of erasure or silencing of violence against women – especially those in who are married – are sustained in the present-day temple structures, structures that were built to honour the values of their/our forefathers. The patriarchal norms are carried through in the observance of menstruation as a dirty and weak bodily function and the aforementioned silencing is demonstrated through a lack of talking about abuse survivors and how the temple could provide care for them. Motsemme (2004) observed the different modalities of women's silence during Truth and Reconciliation Commission submissions, and her work remains important in understanding the registers and meanings of silence.

Motsemme (2004: 917) notes that:

> "Negative manifestations of silencing and silence are plentiful, and can be observed in instances such as political repression and the suffocating silences of sexual violation. In these forms of silencing coercion, physical and emotional violence are always involved. The aim of this article is […] to highlight how silence within a violent everyday can also become a site for reconstituting 'new' meanings and can become a tool of enablement for those oppressed."

Although the act of caring for oneself as a domestic abuse survivor was relegated to the realm of the home – the same place that was the scene of much of the violence Murugalakshmi and Rajeshwari endured – once their partners had died, they found solace in cultivating personal relationships with Hindu deities. The negative manifestations of silencing experienced through official Hinduism at SSSA, was not the end of their relationships with God. The silences endured led to both women constituting new meanings to their religious belief. In fact, they attested to feeling more invigorated through reimagining what individual, non-prescriptive spiritual relationships felt and looked like.

'Self-made' care through spiritual praxis

> "But I wonder 'How did I survive all those years?' It's a big thing. Because today I'm working perfectly. God put it right. God put it right." (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 5)

The ways each of these women practised their own forms of Hinduism and extracted what they needed from the religion to suit their own care needs, are numerous. Both women did,

however, explain their survival and recovery through a spiritual lens. They were adamant that God had guided them and brought them comfort through testing and sometimes violent times.

Rajeshwari cited meditation, both individual and group, as helpful. She wrote out mantras 150 times at the time after her husband's death, where she felt most vulnerable. "I even wrote that mantra 'Om Nama Sivaya' one hundred and fifty times. Look, the fact that I wrote that, I don't know if that mantra actually helped to cope. Maybe it has given me that strength." (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 6). Rajeshwari recounted a particularly important way that she felt supported "spirit-wise" (Rajeshwari, 2017: 6), also in this same period. As a Tamil Hindu, Lord Siva is one of the primary deities of worship. And when a yogi from South India visited a neighbour, she joined for yoga, breathing exercises and meditation sessions. "When these people went back to India – any time I cried, I got photographs of Lord Siva. And when I read it, it was so beautiful. It used to take my mind off everything else that was happening" (Rajeshwari, 2017: 6).

A medium sized *murti* of Lord Siva stands in Rajeshwari's Godlamp area. This, she says, came from Arizona in the United States – completely unannounced, but she thinks it came from the yogi. "So, this Siva came from Arizona in a box. I must have been the chosen one. My God knows I went through so much […] and imagine there's so many people [in the world] but I received it. I was so happy. He, Lord Siva, is constant. That guru also actually went to Ganges too and prayed for me" (Rajeshwari, 2017). These religious connections that spanned continents is fascinating, and broadens the locale to which care is felt and received – it is extended from the SSSA to a global feeling of being cared for and thought of. And the "constant" of Lord Siva underpins this.

Murugalakshmi, from an older generation as Rajeshwari, relied solely on “self-made” (Murugalakshmi,interview, 2017: 8) support, although inspired from her father. “I think my background – well my father started it in me. Because of him, religion was important. He wanted us to become members of the temple and learn. Like even when I had my periods, I told you. He said, 'God created it, so why can't she come?'” (Murugalakshmi,interview, 2017:8). Although self-reliant, her affinity for music (she used to sing on radio broadcasts when she was younger and plays a musical instrument everyday) she calls “meditation” (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 8). Her approach to healing, or survival is also a practice in gratitude – “for even my dramatic marriage, I wake up and thank God everyday.” (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 6)

She acknowledges that her relationship with God is personal, but sometimes has conflicting feelings because of how her practices differ to the ones done in the temple.

> “I have my own way of prayer. I don't even light my lamp these days. I wash it and put it. You find all these things are important but they don't really matter whether you do it or not. [But when] I go to the temple and the ladies are so busy, they bring the sari and drape the *murtis,* I feel such a disgrace I don't do it.” (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 5)

Murugalakshmi admitted, near the end of the interview, that she has a special relationship with Kavady, especially the trance aspects of the festival. Since she was 15-years-old, whenever she attended the Kavady celebrations at the temple she would “feel [she’s] gonna get the trance” (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 7). She would feel scared and dizzy whenever she went as a teenager, and so she hasn’t gone to Kavady since. “It’s the music [...]

that Kavady music will put me in a trance, and if I go will I ever come [back]?" (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 7).

As Shashnee and the other temple management confirm, Kavady is one of the temple's biggest celebrations, but Murugalakshmi abstains from it. The importance of the festival is heightened when taken into account that Lord Muruga is worshipped and the burdens carried are alleviated by Lord Muruga, one of the most highly revered deities for Tamil Hindus (Gopal, 2013). "Kavady puts devotees under enormous stress and compels them to draw on the power of God to relieve their difficulties" (Gopal, 2013: 165), however, for Murugalakshmi, this is not the way she finds spiritual enlightenment, guidance or comfort. In fact, she finds it so uncomfortable that she stays away from the temple on the days that it is arguably, its most public and engaged in religious care work.

Rajeshwari's story about trance was again, different. When a close family member of hers passed away, she went to hospital and was diagnosed with depression and "had a nervous breakdown" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 5). "I was losing weight like hell. I couldn't eat, couldn't sleep and I was in hospital. And when I came out, I went to trance and everything just to help and to cope. It was so difficult. And I prayed to God to never go through it again. But nothing really helped me. So many prayers we did […] at the end of it was just your mind" (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 5).

Did any of the women seek counselling, or go to social services during their marriages, or post their partner's death? During their respective marriages, neither woman went to any of the social services offered as, Murugalakshmi said "that would have then been another problem" (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 9) because of her husband's possessiveness.

“And whenever I went to the temple he’d swear me. He’ll fight and swear” (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 9).

When asked about their thoughts on grief and trauma counselling, both women didn’t connect with the ideas, nor find them useful or relevant to what they experienced and what helped them. However, Rajeshwari relayed this story of her experience with counsellors, psychiatrists and short institutionalisation for depression after an aunt’s death.

> “I went for counselling the first time after that death. When I went for counselling I just talked to her that’s all and she listened. But then we gotta help ourselves no matter what. She’ll give you anti-depressants but it’s about how we deal with it. And how we get strong. Right, through that only I became strong willed – I had full faith in myself that I was going to be strong.” (Rajeshwari interview, 2017: 5)

Murugalakshmi doesn’t subscribe to believing she was strong. At various moments in the interview she exclaimed “How did I survive?” She doesn’t have an answer. God’s presence as a guiding force, and her own practice of gratitude and routine of attending the temple has helped her, but in ways neither her nor I can quantify. When asked about how the temple committee not intervening in her situation, she was still adamant that the temple is a peaceful and important place in the community and harboured no ill-will towards it. “I haven’t left the temple yet! I have lot of faith in the temple” (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 10). Her spiritual practices and her talents as a musician mattered more to her finding a sense of wholeness. Looking back at certain theories about trauma and how it effects the body and connection to community is helpful to understand Murugalakshmi’s stance towards the temple. Sara Ahmed (2014) speaks of the politics of shame and how the cognitive processes of shame add to the loss of connection and meaning-making in a traumatised person’s world.

> "The very physicality of shame – how it works on and through bodies – means that shame also involves the de-forming and reforming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies 'turn away' from the others who witness shame. The 'turning' of shame is painful [...] In shame, the subject may have nowhere to turn." (Ahmed, 2014: 104)

The previous chapter demonstrated the temple committee is a heterogenous group of people with diverse views on whether survivors of domestic abuse should be supported, and how that support looks like. The temple community is a tight-knit one and to publicise that one experiences abuse at home comes with many consequences – such as being termed a "low morality" (Shashnee, 2017: 9) person. Murugalakshmi laughingly stated that the temple committee wouldn't want to mediate the situation with a person like her abusive and alcoholic husband, and she believes the temple thought it was "too much of a private thing [issue]" (Murugalakshmi, 2017: 10). The kinds of shame produced by this situation could have led to further isolation from the perceived care that the temple provides.

In conjunction with shame, there is another reason which could be provided for the reliance on self-made support. My grandmother, who sat in on the interview with Murugalakshmi's permission, made this comment which alludes to greater structural problems in the realm of domestic violence.

> "Thinglemani (my grandmother): But when he [Murugalakshmi's husband] was nice I'd talk to him. I'd ask him and say 'Remember when you were offbeat and go fight and stay? You must forget all that.'
>
> Murugalakshmi: It didn't matter if he was getting old or what. My daughter told him. She swore him.

> Thinglemani: Hey, Nad too […] remember how he took the Godlamp one day and hit her?
>
> Murugalakshmi: Honestly, it's like we are all having turns" (Murugalakshmi interview, 2017: 10)

When asked further about Nad, they explained that he lived on the same street as they did in the late 1960s and he was known in their social circles as someone who also beat his wife. This off-hand comment elaborated on the everydayness of domestic violence and how it is known and spoken about amongst women but ever enters the public realm where help can be sought through social workers, counsellors or the temple community at large. Singh (2013) analysed qualitative data from the advice desk for the abused from the years 2009-2011 and noted that Verulam Magistrates Court dealt with a high volume of domestic violence cases from Hindus. However, during interviews with domestic violence survivors in the Durban area, Singh (2013) noted "many put up with the injustices and abuse, citing stigma, and the 'impact on their children and families'" (Singh, 2013: 146). The 'ordinariness' of abuse coupled with feelings of shame are strong reasons for not turning to the temple community for assistance but relying on oneself and one's own spiritual practices.

Chapter 7: Conclusion – Who takes care of temple aunty?

"Iron nails cannot hold me back

nor mustard seed scattered to my grave

nor five parts cow You have burnt my body

carried me out the side door You let them break my knees

but I will always find my way back to my God."

– Francine Simon's 'Churel' (2017)

I set out on the research idealistically searching for answers – thinking that this research could provide a care framework of healing for abuse survivors. After conducting fieldwork I realised there is no way to adequately give answers to the questions I posed. This study was small in design but it revealed insights into the relationship between care, temple Hinduism, spirituality and abuse.

The dichotomy of what is socially constructed as the private sphere, and the public sphere gives one the impression that care work, spiritual and religious practices and the experiences of domestic and family violence are relegated to the private sphere. My observations in Verulam led me to believe actions in private demand public attention. The temple's lack of conviction in aiding domestic abuse survivors is a form of non-reciprocal care and it fails certain segments of the community. The temple committee's tangible silences and reticence to speak on these topics is overwhelming. Silence, as Motsemme (2004) notes, can mean a variety of things. However, this silence in the context – despite the temple knowing – indicates that inaction is at the root of this silence. And this inaction, and distinct lack of care

provided by the temple is symptomatic of larger patterns of domination that exist in temple Hinduism and Indian family life.

> "Hindu women experience a form of patriarchy where the traditional ideology operates powerfully in the home, which is the private, domestic sphere. (Bhopal, 1997). This ideology plays a strong influence in the continuation of the contentions of traditions such as the glory of respect and status of wifehood and motherhood […] that is central to a cultural identity. Indigenous knowledge, related to religio-cultural functions are also associated with patriarchy and identified reasons for gender roles." (Chirkut, 2006: 30-31)

The way the temple functions is, indeed a space of care, as the management assured me. But it is only *some* kinds of care for *some* kinds of people. In some ways, the intimacy of the community is its undoing – as the domestic violence survivors I spoke to did not feel that they could turn to the temple for help.

This research has attempted to add to the archive of knowledge that prioritises the inner world of abused women. It is an addition to the feminist work of unpicking relations of care, by understanding how care functions in public and private religious spheres. As Pereira (2002) notes: "feminists have long opposed patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism to grapple with the ways in which societies, polities and economies can be structured to support human beings." (Pereira, 2002: 1). Support and care-work is undervalued – and this research shows how recovery journeys of domestic violence survivors is a burden that survivors themselves shoulder – although it should not be that way. We need more analysis of how patriarchal norms in temples coalesce with mainstream, temple Hinduism and a deep disregard for women. A larger scale study that interviews more women of differing ages in the area would

be one way to take this research further. Another way would be to speak to women who are involved with backyard temples, and non-formalised religious groups, to understand how the circuits of care for abused women differs outside of the patriarchal limitations of formal, temple Hinduism.

The ways in which abused women have recrafted the formalised religious practices learnt at the temple in their homes shows how enduring the comfort and care of religion and spirituality is. Trauma, which tore through their lives and homes, did not destroy Murugalakshmi and Rajeshwari's personal relationships to the Divine. Despite them largely doing the care work necessary for their survival alone and unsupported – they did it. Hopefully future generations of women who are in similar situations will not have to rely on institutions that do not see them in their complex totality.

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Appendix

Semi-structured interview schedule

- Tell me a bit about yourself – where you grew up, how old you are and what work you do?
- What was your first encounter with religion/spirituality?
- Do you think that the temple and religion/spirituality helps you or others? And if so, how?
- Which scriptures do you enjoy reading from?
- Do you have a favourite story from Hindu scripture or religious poetry? If so, why could you re-tell it and say why it is your favourite?
- How have you experienced 'bad luck' or traumatic events in your life?
- Could you please describe how these events made you feel then?
- How do you feel now?
- What things got you through this period?
- Which people did you turn to for support in this period of time?
- What do you think about social services in helping people care for others?
- Does the temple help people in processing traumatic events in the congregation's personal life?
- Does one's individual relationship with Hindu spirituality help people heal from periods of bad luck and trauma?
- Are there any other ways you think that traumatised people can be better supported through Hindu spiritual practices? (Prompt: Alternative groups of support and care or more services dedicated to it at the temple)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Vannakum and hello,

Thank you for showing interest in my work and I'm excited that you are willing to be a research participant. This participant information form will ensure that you will have all the necessary information about the research and what you can expect from our relationship.

My name is Youlendree Appasamy and I will be conducting research through interviewing people and will immerse myself in the life of the Shri Siva Subramaniar Alayam in Verulam. This research forms part of my research for my Masters in Political Studies at University of Witwatersrand.

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study is to understand how care and care-giving is structured in Hindu spirituality through the personal stories of trauma survivors. It can be of potential benefit to the community if the research points to better ways of caring for vulnerable people in the community who have suffered trauma.

2. **Selection:** I am looking for people over the age of 18 who either worship at this temple, or use to, and have used Hindu spirituality as a tool to heal from traumatic events and bad luck. I am interested in the care-giving and care-receiving relationship and so kindly invite you to be a part of the research.

3. **Processes to be followed:** A set of semi-structured interviews will take place (between two and three) and these will happen on a day, time and place that is suitable for both of us.This could be in your home, or another location. I may choose to shadow participants may if for the benefit of the research. This will be done with the participant's permission and at times suitable for us both.

4. **Duration:** The semi-structured interviews will take approximately 1 hour each.

5. **Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured on my password protected personal laptop in Verulam in a locked file. In the event of a publication resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary and you can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer and interview questions will be sent to you before the time so you can structure your responses to your comfort level.

7. **Payment:** No payment will be offered in this research.

8. **Counseling**: The research may bring back bad memories or trigger past trauma, I have contacted local counseling and support services such as the Verulam Family and Social services and they will be on hand to counsel those who feel they need it. An information sheet of these numbers and addresses will be given to you when the interviews take place.

9. **On completion of research:** The research will available in hard copy and online through the University of Witwatersrand. Let me know if you would like a summary of the report and I will send it to you when I'm finished with the research.

Questions

If you have any more questions, feel free to find me at the temple every Sunday service, contact me on 083 653 6139 or email me on appasamyy@gmail.com. My supervisor, Dr Shireen Hassim can be emailed on this address: shireen.hassim@wits.ac.za.

CONSENT FORM

I, the research participant, consent to take part in Youlendree Appasamy, the researcher's, masters research report.

I have read this form and the participant information sheet and have had an opportunity to ask Youlendree about anything I am confused about. The research has been explained to me and I understand the nature of the research.

I am a voluntary participant and there is no obligation for me to take part in the research. My involvement in the research can range from semi-structured interviews to being shadowed by Youlendree for a day. I am free at any point to withdraw my consent.

I agree/disagree to audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews (please circle).

I have been guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity and I understand that Youlendree's research will be published in printed and electronic forms through the University of Witwatersrand. I will be sent a summary of the research by Youlendree if I so wish.

_____ _____

Participant signature **Date**

_____ _____

Researcher signature **Date**

Feel free to find Youlendree at the temple every Sunday service in July, contact them on 083 653 6139 or email them at appasamyy@gmail.com. Youlendree's supervisor, Dr Shireen Hassim can be emailed on this address: shireen.hassim@wits.ac.za.