GRFDT Interview
The biggest problem is there has been lack of focused attention to the area of knowledge transfer, says Ambassador J C Sharma

Book Review
Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora
By Dr. Pierre Gottschlich

Global Update
Middle East remains favorite destination of the International migrants
Dear All,

Diaspora, no doubt, becoming one of the most important interdisciplinary research area globally today, has penetrated into many disciplines and sub-disciplines in the last one decade. However, there are also many neglected areas which need more focus and the GRFDT tries to bring them into forefront. GRFDT seminar series, interviews and other contents try to fill this gap and intends to serve the purpose of researchers and other stakeholders better.

The mainstream diaspora debate talks about identity, state engagement, labour diaspora, knowledge diaspora, policy issues, media, and culture etc., yet, some areas have comparatively received less attention. One such area is that of gender in the colonial setting which has not been drawing much attention in the mainstream social sciences and humanities research. Based on the Amitav Ghosh’s two novels “Sea of Poppies” and “River of Smoke”, Dr. Nandini Sen brought many new insights into the role and conditions of women in the society in 19th century indentured Indian diaspora.

This issue carries an interview on “diaspora policy” which has been one of the major areas of discourse in both policy and academic domain. Ambassador J.C. Sharma, who is one of the best known scholar as well as a practitioner on diaspora policy shared his views on variety of issues. He has been an expert in diaspora policies in different countries in the world and his decade long experience in dealing with Indian diaspora will certainly enlighten and provide better insight into the diaspora policy.

The book review by Dr. Pierre Gottschlich on “Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora” similarly, throws interesting light on the dynamics of South Asian diaspora.

Once again we thank all the diaspora scholars who have been providing ideas and contents and moral support to make the effort more meaningful to cater to the need of scholars working on diaspora and transnationalism.
GRFDT organized a seminar on Gender and Diaspora: A Study of Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* on 27th October, 2012 at Room No. 13, CSSS II, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. A welcome note and brief introduction about the speaker was given by Saroj Mahanand, Asst. Professor, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Dr. Nandini C. Sen is an Associate Professor, Cluster Innovation Centre, University of Delhi.

Dr. Sen spoke on the gendered history of migration via Amitav Ghosh’s novel “*Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*”. She started with how indentured system affected the role and conditions of women in the society in the 19th century, which was marked as mass human displacements, primarily from the labouring class across regions, nations and continents. With the growth of colonies as well as capitalist production system, a new labour regime was introduced in which labourers migrated from agricultural or cotton industries to gigantic industrial or plantation activities across the continent under the indentured system. Through the indentured system, the Indian immigrants from Chota Nagpur in Eastern India, Saran, Chapara, Shahabad, Champaran, Gaya and other places of Bihar went to European colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Natal, Surinam and so on. The importation of Indian labourers was carried out through informal networks of recruiters in localities. However, the lacking of legal and civic rights resulted in their socio-economic exploitation in terms of long working hours, poor wages and no protection for their lives. The sexual exploitation of women by the employer and/or the recruiters has been evident. There was ownership of time, labour and person of indentured labour. The owner applied various forces and coercive methods to extract maximum labour. There were restrictions on mobility of labour as well as moving outwards for deliberative opportunities. The labourers were subjugated, exploited and marginalized by the employers as well as by owners.

Against this backdrop, Amitav Ghosh’s novel brilliantly explored the much neglected aspect of female exploitation. Dr. Sen’s analysis was based on the stories from ‘*Sea of Poppies*’ and ‘*River of Smoke*’. In “*Sea of Poppies*” she discussed the gendered aspect of migration through the lens of literary story telling. She discussed one character named Deeti, an uneducated Brahmin widow of an impotent opium addict faced sexual exploitation from her own brother-in-law. After her husband’s death, she gets attracted to a chamar man named Kalua in the ship only. She wants to become sati but Kalua dramatically rescues her. Both of them want to get married and since then, they pretend to be a married couple and Deeti calls herself a chamar woman.

The women being co-workers in plantations could choose their own partners. Unlike other Indian women, Deeti had this privilege and free ground to choose her life-partner at that point of time. The causal argument would be the distance from the traditional restrictions of their own society. Then, the discussion proceeded with how caste system had an impact on Diaspora. The research shows that the watertight caste compartments tend to loosen
up in the unknown shores. Referring to Ghosh’s mouth-piece, Deeti, the women preferring to marry men who are settled rather than of the same caste. Being away from their own social spaces allows them more leverage. The poverty in the homeland, which caused the diaspora in the first place, was forgotten or overwritten with the feeling that it was home, a place where the present alienation of the diasporic person did not exist. Because they knew there were no possibilities of physical return back to their home, therefore, spiritual, religious and emotional bonds were ongoing necessities. Like hawkers, they carried things such as a Ganapati idol, a dog-eared copy of the Gita or the Quran, an old sari or other deshi outfit, a photograph of pilgrimage or, in modern times, a video cassette of the latest hit from the home country along with their head-loads and/or suitcases.

Amitav Ghosh’s River of Smoke is the second book in his much acclaimed Ibis trilogy. The book begins with a glimpse into Diti’s shrine. Diti is widowed yet again as her new husband Kalua alias Madhu is forced to flee from the ship. The name which the Colonizershad imposed on him – MaddowColver, now becomes the name of Diti’s clan. The clan has grown and prospered and Diti now appears to be the matriarch of a large and a fairly prosperous family. Diti’s influence on the family can be seen in her organization of the trips to her shrine and by continuing to remain the link between her brethren on the ship. In this novel, Paulette is foregrounded. Her escapades continue to be dramatic as she takes on the garb of a man and continues to live by herself in the Isle of Maurice. Later, Paulette joins Mr. Penrose on a journey to Canton on a botanical expedition. Canton becomes the centre of Ghosh’s concern in this novel and much of the China of the 19th century is seen through the eyes of Paulette who deciphers the place from the long letters written to her by Robert Chinnery, the fictional ille gitmate son of the painter George Chinnery. As in the previous book, Ghosh stresses the worth and solidity of his female characters. They are seen as doers with very definite agency. In the life and times of the first set of Diasporics, it is the women who create, construct and nurture. From life unfolding from the Hindu tool box to the annual visit to Diti’s shrine, Ghosh presents his women characters as the creators and nurturers of civilization. In the debate on gender and diaspora whether it is liberating or debilitating for women, Ghosh opines with the former. While being torn away from one’s land and cultural traditions is extremely painful, his women characters are able to thread their lives in the adopted land and start their lives afresh emphasizing their zest for life and a very definite political and social agency.

Later on, Dr. Veena Sharma, who moderated the seminar, gave her insights over this concept of indentured system in India and explored various socio-cultural issues related to immigrants of India. She pointed the “Jahaji Bhai” phenomena which was predominant during colonial period. The Indian immigrants felt homelessness and rootlessness while residing outside the country. The concept of “purity and impurity” was also dominant among these immigrants when they had to cross the Kala-pani, which was against the religious faith as it was believed that one becomes impure after crossing it.

The programme ended with the discussions with participants on various issues and questions related to gender, enslavement, cultural conflict and regime of colonial power etc. The seminar explored various socio-cultural-human dimensions of the gendered ‘labour diaspora’ via indentured system.

Report By
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Book Review


The global South Asian diaspora has received much academic attention in recent years. Many insightful books on the subject have been published, and countless articles and conference papers have been devoted to this issue. Nearly all of these publications have focused either on a single South Asian community in a certain country, or on a unique period or experience in the history of South Asian migration, or on a specific issue or problem within the diaspora or in its relationship towards their new homelands or towards India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh. Very few books have taken on the gigantic task of a general overview, and where they have done so, they tend to follow the issue country-wise by examining the South Asian diaspora in the United States of America, in Great Britain, in Mauritius, and so on without necessarily connecting the case studies by a theoretical model. Examples include the still rightfully highly praised *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora* (New Delhi 2001) or, more recently, the *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, edited by Brij V. Lal (Singapore 2006). While these approaches have been useful sources of facts and data, they mostly lack a broad overarching effort to explain, understand, and predict the dynamics of South Asian migration and diaspora formation – which is exactly what the new book by the acclaimed British historian Judith M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora*, attempts to do.

According to Brown, becoming a diaspora, and particularly a successful one, is a “long-term business” (p. 29) and hard work. Migrants face three different tasks that have to be fulfilled in order to form a lasting diasporic community: Firstly, they have to “establish new homes, social networks and communities” within the host country. Secondly, they have to “relate to the public space and life of their new homeland”. Finally, they have to “establish their ‘connections [...] with their old homeland” (pp. 173-174). While the first task relates to the establishment of an “economic base” (p. 60) and, thereby, functions as a necessary but in itself not sufficient precondition to the following levels of diaspora formation, the second step may also be described as social integration, while the third assignment clearly has political implications. With this theoretical model, Brown has a tool for describing and analyzing the global South Asian diaspora without limiting herself to one or two case studies. However, many of her arguments naturally stem from the South Asian experience in the United Kingdom, which at times contradicts the self-set objective of a general overview.

Before applying her theoretical model to the South Asian diaspora, Brown describes the general historical context of her study. In the first chapter, “Stability and Movement”, she explores the traditions of migration on the Indian subcontinent and draws broad lines from pre-colonial times to the age of British imperial rule to the new opportunities after independence. Brown describes the causes and forms of traditional and modern internal mobility in South Asia (pp. 12-19), including the “imperial movement” of people within British India. Reasons for and varieties of outward migration and external mobility are the topic of the second part of this chapter (pp. 17-27). The following section, “Making a Modern Diaspora”, broadly assesses this outbound movement. Brown distinguishes several flows of migration within two eras: In the “age of empire”, a colonial diaspora was established with the system of indentured labour (pp. 30-34). Later, contract labourers under the *kangani*-system followed (pp. 34-35), while the relatively free movement of so-called “passenger Indians” formed the third wave of outward migration during that period. The second broad era, “decolonisation and globalisation”, spans from the days of independence to the beginning of the 21st century. An initial important migration movement brought many South Asians to the United Kingdom, mostly via “chain migration” (pp. 40-45). The “twice-migrants” from Burma, East Africa, Surinam, and other countries represent the first significant relocations within the South Asian diaspora (pp. 45-50). From the 1970s on, numerous Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis went to the Middle East, forming a large guest worker community but not necessarily constituting a settled diaspora (pp. 50-52). Finally, the current era of accelerating globalisation encouraged the migration of skilled and educated South Asians to the rich countries of the western world (pp. 52-57).

After these very useful introductory remarks to the overall formation of the South Asian diaspora, Brown turns to her model of different consecutive tasks a diaspora needs to fulfil in order to establish itself as a lasting and successful community. Here, the first phase of establishing an economic base in the host country is definitely the most important one, since it is a necessary prerequisite for any further development. Hence, the chapter dealing with this early stage of diaspora formation, “Creating New Homes and Communities” (pp. 59-111), forms the quantitative and qualitative heart of Brown’s study. According to Brown, three variables are of prime importance to the possible economic success of diasporic migration: The nature of the host economy (agricultural, industrial, or post-industrial), the education and skills of the migrants, and their “initial socio-economic status” (p. 61). The South Asian indentured and contract labourers of the 19th and early 20th century were mostly unskilled workers who were employed on plantations in largely agricultural...
Their status was extremely low, which limited the opportunities to become economically independent after the contract requirements were fulfilled and, consequently, left many of these labourers in harsh economic conditions and forced them to remain in what Hugh Tinker accurately described as a “new system of slavery”. In contrast, the Indian and Pakistani (and later Bangladeshi) migrants who came to the United Kingdom after World War II were free people. They came from rural middle-class families and had at least some basic level of education. Furthermore, they could rely on small financial resources which helped many of them establishing themselves successfully in the urban-industrial host economy (pp. 67-73). The skilled South Asian migrants of the late 20th century had and continue to have much better capabilities to succeed and prosper in complex modern economies (pp. 73-74). Their education and qualification makes them highly adaptable to the challenges of globalisation.

Parallel to the creation of an economic base South Asians construct diasporic networks and communities which often lead to the establishment of “ethnic enclaves” (p. 78). Social networks form an “emotional home” (p. 76) and fulfil many practical functions such as supplying goods and supporting cultural traditions (p. 80). They are created and reinforced by ties of kinship, neighbourhood, and marriage and also relate to institutions of “gift giving” and caste imported from the Indian subcontinent (pp. 81-87). Religious networks can be a source of both linkage and division among the South Asian diaspora (p. 93). The reinvention of religious and cultural traditions and their adaptation to the new situation can form a strong bond within the diaspora (pp. 97-102). In particular, the construction of temples has served many different functions and is of paramount importance to the formation of South Asian diasporic communities (p. 103).

The question of integration into host societies is the topic of the next chapter, “Relating to the New Homeland“. The oftentimes problematic relationship between ethnicity and national identity among South Asians in the diaspora can be traced back to the era of colonial control. Labourers from British India who were brought to all regions of the Empire faced severe problems after their host countries gained independence. Being denied Indian citizenship, they often were subject to strict regulations, discrimination, and even expulsion in their countries of residence, which lead to waves of “twice migrants” from Malaysia, Guyana, and East Africa (pp. 114-117). In the western world, South Asians have experienced integration as well as segregation. Whereas particularly Indians are a natural part of the “American dream” in the United States, many South Asians suffer from ethnic discrimination, institutionalised racism, and harassment in Britain as they are perceived as a threat to the British national identity (p. 121). Consequently, South Asian “realities” include economic success and social deprivation, successful political participation and problems in areas like health care and education (pp. 124-137).

Within the often difficult framework of finding an economic, social, and also emotional place in the host society, South Asians are confronted with the third task of the theoretical model of becoming a successful diaspora: “Relating to the Old Homeland”, the last chapter.

Early diasporic flows had been largely “cut off from India” due to poverty and poor communication structures (pp. 149-150). They experienced an isolated and self-centred development. For them, “India” was a myth rather than an actual reality. The later, “modern” diaspora benefited from technological advancements (pp. 151-153). Internet, e-mail, and cheap long-distance telephone connections have made contacts to the old homeland easier, while convenient and affordable air travel has opened the door to regular visits. Hence, the contributions of the diaspora towards India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have been increasing in recent years: Remittances and “diaspora money” has helped many regions on the subcontinent by providing better infrastructure, better education, or better health care on a private level (pp. 154-157). Especially India has furthermore profited from charitable investment on a public level. Social, educational, and health programmes are financed by the diaspora, which is also very active in the area of disaster relief (pp. 157-158). Furthermore, the South Asian diaspora has become more involved on the subcontinent on a political level. Conflicts in Kashmir and Punjab have been among the issues South Asians abroad have put on their agenda, supplying financial and organisational resources (pp. 160-163). The global hindutva-movement has generated much support in the diaspora with consequences relating back to India (pp. 164-169). However, Brown does not acknowledge the efforts of the Indian diaspora to further New Delhi’s foreign policy, particularly in the relationship towards the United States, an area which will likely become even more important in the future.

Overall, Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora is an insightful introduction to the South Asian diaspora. It offers a wide range of knowledge brought together by a theoretical model that is both sophisticated and easy to grasp. This model is convincingly applied to the South Asian diaspora. Most of the arguments, however, stem from the experiences of Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshs in Britain or, to a lesser degree, in the United States. Large portions of the South Asian diaspora in South Africa, East Asia, or the Persian Gulf area receive only little attention. Furthermore, some of the facts and figures used are outdated, particularly concerning the Indian American community. Nonetheless, Brown has written an outstandingly readable book which should not be missed by any student of the South Asian diaspora.

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GRFDT Interview

"The biggest problem is there has been lack of focused attention to the area of knowledge transfer." - Ambassador J C Sharma

... we have not developed a mechanism for channelizing the remittances in development activities, particularly in infrastructure sector. We had recommended issue of bonds on the pattern of Israel and had even suggested those who contribute substantially to these bonds can be given PIO card on gratis basis says Ambassador Sharma in an interview with Dr. Sadananda Sahoo, editor of Roots and Routes.

Ambassador J.C. Sharma you have been one of the key architects of India's diaspora policy ever since you took over as the Member Secretary of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora. One of the pioneering works is the Report of the High Level Committee on India Diaspora under the chairmanship of L.M. Singhvi and you as Member Secretary. It has been 11 years since then and how do you retrospect and assess the development in terms government and community engagement, success stories etc?

The biggest achievement of High Level Committee (HLC) has been to make diaspora an important component of India’s foreign policy agenda. We also succeeded in achieving our objective of making both diaspora and people of India conscious of the concept of global Indian family. The report provided a blueprint for our engagement with diverse Indian diaspora. We have achieved good success in some areas, however, a lot more could be done in some other sectors particularly science & technology and knowledge transfer. Greater attention should also have been paid to non-English speaking Indian communities abroad.

In Part III of the High level committee report, several interim reports were submitted to the Government of India where you have strongly advocated for Persons of Indian Origin Card (PIO Card) Scheme. How far do you feel the initiatives reached by now?

PIO and OCI Cards have been very successful schemes. Because of legislative process, it took some time to put the OCI scheme in place. There is now much greater awareness on the part of the overseas Indians to acquire OCI card. The biggest problem now is the long period it takes in processing the applications and dispatching the cards from India. We lose a lot of goodwill because of inordinate and avoidable delay. In my view, the process can be simplified in respect of a very large percentage of applicants, particularly first generation migrants. We must also give little more discretion to the Heads of the Mission. There a number of cases of descendants of Indians had migrated as indenture labour, where there is no doubt about their Indian ancestry. However, it is difficult for them to produce all the required documentation.

What achievement the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas achieved so far. What are your suggestions if any?

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was the single most important factor in creating consciousness about the concept of global Indian family. It also created a web like relationship between India and various Indian communities abroad. It made people much more aware about extraordinary diversity of Indian diaspora. Prior to PBD, there was very little awareness about communities in places like Guadeloupe, Martinique, Reunion Islands and Madagascar etc. People also had very little knowledge about places like Surinam. It also created much more awareness about secondary and tertiary migrants like Surinami Hindustanis in Holland or Indian migrants from East Africa in various parts of the world. PBD also identified the focus areas of co-operation. It also provided a forum for exchange of views between Indian policy makers and the diaspora. It has also emerged as a forum for redressal of grievances by overseas Indians.
Thanks to PBD, the government carries out a review of the commitments made in the past and assesses the state of implementation. The problem with PBD has been that it has become a very routine exercise. There is no innovation. It has also not paid required attention to knowledge transfer, and science & technology and healthcare. In recent years, PBD has become very gulf centric. The other positive fallout of PBD has been the events organized by some of the States to coincide with PBD. Vibrant Gujarat has been a major success story. The biggest criticism of PBD which I have heard from a very large number of overseas Indians is no involvement/association whatsoever of the opposition in the event. Every single PBD held outside Delhi has been in a UPA run state. Excessive attention to some sections while ignoring other large components has been other major criticism. The event should not be treated as yet another routine conference.

What is your opinion on Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards for the Indian Diaspora?
The awards were conceived with two objectives in mind. One, to officially recognize those who have made contribution to enhancing the prestige or development of India and/her Diaspora. The other reason was to also make people aware that the awards given by some unscrupulous organization with commercial motives had no official recognition or sanctity. Unfortunately there have been a few controversies about awards given to certain individuals. This must be avoided at all costs. I also feel that with this award, the Pravasis should not be eligible for Padmashree and Padma Bhushan. We must clearly deliver the message that this award is in the same class as Padma Bhushan. A PBD awardee should be considered only for Padma Vibhushan and Bharat Ratna in case of extraordinary achievements. If my memory serves me right, the former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee had minuted on the file that the Pravasi Samman awardees should not be considered for Padma awards. In my view, giving Padmashree to Pravasi Samman awardees devalues the Pravasi Samman.

What is your opinion about Indian diaspora in neighboring countries? The report of the high level committee has a special section on the Indian diaspora in the neighbouring countries. What is your opinion about it?
We had consciously avoided dealing with the Diaspora in neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka etc. for obvious reasons. I think these countries are a class apart and we must understand the political sensitivities. We can at best consider Indian citizens working in these countries as our Diaspora. Even this has to be dealt with very carefully in the case of Nepal. We, therefore, considered in some detail only the case of Myanmar which does deserve attention of the government for historical reasons.

What is your view on Diaspora Philanthropy? Which are the areas do you find have already made some impact and what lessons we can learn from them?
Diaspora Philanthropy has not been sufficiently tapped. It is primarily in the areas of religion, healthcare and education. A lot more could be done in education, healthcare and rural development. We have not developed hassle free mechanism without compromising the security. I have heard many stories where people have had to bribe junior officials for getting the required approvals. The area we have neglected most is higher education. You would recall that at one time the IITians in US had offered to set up an IIT in India. We did not encourage the idea and wanted to keep the government control. I strongly believe we must give incentives for such initiatives. Indian School of Business, Hyderabad has emerged as a premier institution of management education, yet it continues to receive completely unnecessary queries from organizations like AICTE. The other concept which we have yet to develop in higher education is donation of time. A large number of Indian academics abroad would be happy to give one or two lectures a week through video conferencing. We have done nothing to do this in an organized manner. Similarly, many Professors are willing to be co-guides of Ph.D students. Retired scientists and academics can be of immense help in knowledge transfer.

Please tell us about the Indian diaspora organizations. Did they create any meaningful impact in engaging with India? Did they create any impact on development?
Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) founded in 1989 was a very good initiative. Unfortunately, it got divided. They have served a useful purpose in creating awareness about violation of human rights of people of Indian origin in places like Fiji, Caribbean, and Malaysia etc. They have also taken up some of the issues of concern to the community like surrender of cancelled passports etc. They have not been able to do much in areas like business development, knowledge transfer and philanthropy. In India, Antar Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad (ARSP) was the pioneer in developing relations with old Diaspora and brought out some useful publications. The Conference of PIO Parliamentarians was particularly noteworthy.

There are several initiatives in the past such as Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), Diaspora Knowledge Network (DKN) etc. by International agencies and Government agencies in India which have not made any significant impact. What lessons can we learn from them?

The biggest problem is there has been lack of focused attention to the area of knowledge transfer. There was also no dedicated agency to deal with this question. Even now, it receives hardly any attention in the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. In HLC Report we had made detailed recommendations for cooperation in areas like science & technology, healthcare and education. Unfortunately, very little work has been done for the implementation of those recommendations. When I was Secretary, I was convener of a group constituted for promoting scientific cooperation in selection areas. We had identified areas for collaboration with Diaspora Scientists in Washington D.C. We must follow the mission mode for such cooperation. Some areas/technologies can be identified for joint work by Indian and Diaspora scientists.

India receives the largest amount of remittances in the world but unfortunately there is no proper plan to utilize these huge resources. There are studies which mentioned that Philippines and Bangladesh have better policy to utilize the remittances in more meaningful way. Do you suggest some new insight into how to utilize this and what are the best international practices?

I entirely agree that we have not developed a mechanism for channelizing the remittances in development activities, particularly in infrastructure sector. We had recommended issue of bonds on the pattern of Israel and had even suggested those who contribute substantially to these bonds can be given PIO card on gratis basis. I am confident that we could have received substantial contributions for bonds for highways and power sector. Israel has raised billions of dollars through Israel Bonds. We need to emulate that example with suitable modifications for our needs.

Any other important issues you would like to highlight?

One of the major recommendations of the High Level Committee was to create a detailed data bank of the Diaspora. It is essential to have details of all diaspora organizations in every field. The data bank must include the achievers of the People of Indian Origin (PIO) in areas like science & technology, education, business and entrepreneur, healthcare and other important professions. One area which we have not touched in this interview is the engagement of youth of the Diaspora. We must pay focused attention to engaging the youth. Education can play a very useful role. We must have India Study Programmes of different durations in selected Indian Universities particularly in the States like Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. MASA programme of Israel is a very good example of engaging the youth of Diaspora. We must have India Study Programmes of different durations in selected Indian Universities particularly in the States like Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. MASA programme of Israel is a very good example of engaging the youth of Diaspora. It is important that regular round tables are held on some identified areas rather than concentrating entirely on PBD. It is absolutely essential that PBD’s level is once again raised to the First and Second PBD and the event is held in a completely non partisan manner.

Ambassador J.C. Sharma, Former Member Secretary of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, which brought out a 576 pages report titled “Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora” submitted in the year 2001 to the Government of India. It was an outcome of detailed discussions with the diasporic scholars and community organizations across the globe. Ambassador Sharma was also the Member Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the 1st and 2nd Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Indian Diaspora Day) celebrations. Ambassador Sharma has research interest in wide range of areas starting from foreign policy, diaspora, Education Diplomacy and India’s Cultural linkages with South East Asia particularly old Hindu Buddhist monuments.
The Centre for Development Studies organized a Ninth Short-Term Training on Methods and Approaches to Research and Migration Issues from October 15 to October 19, 2012. The programme was coordinated by Prof. S. Irudaya Rajan, Director, Research Unit, Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Trivendrum. The main objective of the programme was to acquaint researchers with emerging issues and consequences of migration and diaspora and familiarize them with the research tools of conducting surveys as well as of assessing the magnitudes, characteristics, flows and implications of migration and diaspora based on types and sources of data.

The programme started on 15th of October, 2012 with the Inaugural Session in which Prof. Rajan introduced about the training programme on migration, which was followed by the inaugural address by Prof. K C Sunny and special address by Prof. K C Zachariah. The programme was attended by participants from different universities and institutes countrywide. It was knowledge gaining interaction with all participants having different background and study areas.

In all thirty papers were presented, out of which five were on international migration and diaspora. The paper on “Emigration and India’s Foreign Policy” presented by T. P. Sreenivasan discussed the causes and consequences of Indian Diaspora in United States of America. He talked about the pros and cons of Indian Diaspora in US and its social-cultural impact. The second generation Indians need not face severe challenges as their ancestors faced earlier. The paper was focused on political perspectives of Indian Diaspora and its impact in USA. A major limitation was lack of data and statistics which is important to show the experiences of the Indian Diaspora in US. Dr. Didar Singh, Former Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs talked about the phases and types of Indian Diaspora and explained how the Indian Diaspora is taking new shape in Post 1990s. He raised many socio-political issues which are important to understand the Diaspora in the present context. The paper on “Migration, Diaspora and Development” was presented by Dr. Ajay Kumar Sahoo specifically focusing on the Telugu Diaspora. He explained the socio-cultural-linguistic influence of Telugu Diaspora on host-countries. The Telugu Diaspora is playing an important role in the development of back home through remittances. There was a paper on “Migration and Remittances” presented by Dr. Hrushikesh Mallick where he touched upon issues such as the impact of remittances on the home and host country. The presentation of papers was followed by discussion.

During this training programme, there was a visit to Migrant Forum India/NDWM to know the conditions of migrants in Kerala as well as to NORKA ROOTS which interpret the facilities and legal rights of the Non-Residents Keralites. This gave lots of exposure to understand the practical knowledge and insight of the ground reality of the migrants and their families in Kerala (both migrants in Kerala and migrants of Kerala).

The Training Programme ended on 19th of October, 2012 with a lecture on Future Research Directions by Prof. Rajan. Finally, the certificates were distributed by George Joseph, former Ambassador and S. Krishna Kumar, Former Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. The five day training programme gave new insights into methodological issues involving international migration and diaspora.

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Global Update

Middle East remains favorite destination of the International migrants

In a recent report titled “Regulating Private Recruitment in the Asia-Middle East Labour Migration Corridor” by Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias released in August 2012 by International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Migration Policy Institute (MPI) mentioned that Middle East is the most favourite destination of International migration. The report finds three distinct characteristics of migration to Middle East. (1) The economy of Middle East is highly dependent on migrant workers. Migrants constitute 53 percent of total population of Arab Gulf (2) Asian migrants in the Gulf remain most vulnerable and prone to human rights abuse. This is due to illiteracy among the migrant population who are more prone to exploitation. Women also constitute a very significant numbers among the migrant population i.e one third of the total labour in Oman; and (3) Middle East is the most competitive labour market in the world. This is partly due to the reason that many Asian countries who are beneficiaries of remittance promote migration by providing institutional support. The report also finds that though the onus for regulating the employer-employee relationship falls to recruitment agencies, they are often ill equipped to effectively enforce labour standards.

Global economic crisis affect the Migration inflow into OECD

International Migration Outlook 2012 published by the Secretary-General of the OECD reveals that there is a drop in employer demand reducing the labour demand to the OECD countries. Temporary labour migration fell almost everywhere during the recession, including Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States. In 2010 inflows of labour migrants to OECD countries was around 780 000 as compared with 880 000 in 2007. The report also finds that the demand also affects the inflow of high skilled labour too especially among the Asians. However, the hope may not last longer. The report cautioned that the inflow of high skilled labour force may reduce to OECD countries once Asia develops. The report suggested for proper policy measures to tackle the imminent challenges for the economic development of the OECD countries that includes improving the standard of wages and working conditions and promoting better recruitment practices. These crises should make the OECD countries to learn lesson and take appropriate measures, the report stated.

Afghan Diaspora engages in Knowledge Transfer and Capacity Building

The decade long conflict in Afghanistan led to serious damage to the country’s economy as well as society. The IS Academy Migration Policy Report by Katie Kuschminder published in December 2011 mentioned that the conflict led to migration of the highly skilled to other countries, destruction of education system, inflation, low public-sector wages. However, the report also find some encouraging facts recent years i.e the contribution of Afghan diaspora to the non economic sector. Since 2001, the Government of Afghanistan in collaboration with many international organizations such as UNDP, World Bank, International Organization for Migration (IOM) etc. promoted several programmes such as Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals Program (TOKTEN), Afghanistan Expatriates Programme, TRQN project of the IOM respectively. Several sectors which benefited by these programmes includes education, health, and Infrastructure development. Based on 42 interviews with project participants, host institutions, colleagues of participants, and key stakeholders, the report reveals that these programmes not only gave personal satisfaction to the diaspora for their involvement of the development of their home country, but also it made visible impact in many areas such as capacity building, skill enhancement that are in demand in the local areas. The report strongly suggest for continuation of such programme for long term benefit of the Afghanistan.

We invite Students, Researchers and Faculty Members to submit Stories, Reviews, Articles, Working papers and other academic notes to the editor. It will provide the scholars a platform to connect with peer groups working on themes related to Diaspora and Transnationalism. Information related to seminar/conferences/events can be sent to the Editor at: editor@grfdt.com
CALL FOR PAPERS

International Migration Review, Special Issue on South-South Migrations

The International Migration Review requests papers for a special issue on trends, emerging patterns, and analytic and policy issues concerning international migration between and among developing nations and transitional economies in Africa, Asia, South and Latin America, and part of Eastern European nations, or broadly defined ‘south-south migrations.’ The goal of the special issue is to communicate scholarship which addresses the most significant and critical analytic issues pertaining to the south-south migrations and mobilities.

Papers should be submitted to editorial offices of the International Migration Review (imr@cmsny.org) by 15 December 2012. Author guidelines can be found at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1747-7379/homepage/ForAuthors.html. Additional inquiries regarding the special issue should be made to one or more of the guest editors using the following email addresses: Philippe De Lombaerde: pdelombaerde@cris.unu.edu, Fei Guo: fei.guo@mq.edu.au, Helion Povoa-Neto: heli-onpovoaneto@gmail.com

Note: The list of information about Conferences/Seminars/Call for Papers in this newsletter are compiled from the web-sources and researchers are requested to contact the organizers and cross check the details before sending the abstract/paper and most importantly before registering.