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# Roots and Routes

Monthly Newsletter of the  
Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism



**GRFDT**  
Global Research Forum on  
Diaspora and Transnationalism



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RESEARCH AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN DIASPORA AND TRANSNATIONALISM

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# Editor's Message



Dear All,

Wish you a very Happy New Year 2013!

GRFDT began the New Year with consolidating its activities. The website is almost getting complete. We have compiled a video gallery from various sources such as YouTube and other websites too. These videos cover a range of issues related to identity, culture, economy, politics, transnationalism, etc. Some of the most important links are Prof. Robin Cohen's talk on "Evolution of Diaspora as a concept", Mira Nair speaking on "Cinema and Diaspora" etc. Hope this will be very useful for research as well as teaching. The videos are searchable with key words. However, we strive to improve our database with your feedback for better use. We are also flooded with useful information from our peers from academics and policy making domains. Our researchers are promptly analyzing the reports/ documents in news format.

This issue covers a wide range of topics. The monthly seminar was on the theme "(Re)framing the Nation: Chinese and Indian Diaspora Policies in Historical Perspective" by Dr. Els van Dongen, Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She highlighted many issues that these two gigantic Diasporas confront with the nation states and how their policies respond to them.

Similarly, the interview with Dr. Shanthini Pillai explores many issues related to how language and identity play an important role in various ways and in various contexts. She also speaks about the transcending nature of culture across boundaries. The next article is related to the evolution of Indian diaspora and the role of Mahatma Gandhi. Though Indian diaspora became prominent during post liberalization, it however shares a deep rooted history. The special article on 'Mahatma Gandhi and Diaspora' by Ambassador J. C. Sharma provides us with fresh insights into how Gandhiji contributed to the evolution of Indian diaspora.

The book title "Living Across Worlds: Diaspora, Development and Transnational Engagement - Edited by Ninna Nyberg Sorensen" was reviewed by Dr. Mahalingam. The issue also has information related to seminar, conferences, news contributed by our readers as well as by GRFDT members.

**(Sadananda Sahoo)**

### GRFDT Seminar

#### **(Re)Framing the Nation** *Chinese and Indian Diaspora Policies in Historical Perspective*

#### **Dr. Els van Dongen**

GRFDT organised a Seminar on “(Re)Framing the Nation: Chinese and Indian Diaspora Policies in Historical Perspective”. Dr Mahalingam welcomed the speaker Dr. Els van Dongen, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and other participants. Dr Smita Tiwari moderated the seminar and briefly discussed about Diaspora. While highlighting the comparative perspective, Dr. Tiwari briefly highlighted the policies undertaken by the both giant countries towards their diaspora.

Dr. Dongen talked that in recent years, comparisons of India (the “elephant”) and China (the “dragon”) have witnessed a dramatic rise. The focus has mostly been on their economic rise and their changing diplomatic ties—whereas some have emphasized aspects of “Chindian” cooperation, others have noted the continued competition between the two “giants”—and the effects of this globally, as well as the effects for different regions of the world specifically. At the same time, interest in comparative diaspora policies has increased in the context of the ascent of global migration and the expansion of research on the diaspora-development nexus. In spite of both these developments, however, comparisons of Chinese and Indian diaspora policies remain rare. Critics of such a comparison might point at important differences between the two diasporas—such as the role of caste, class, language, colonialism, and religion—but there is nevertheless much to be said in favor of a comparison.

Dr. Dongen brought few points of differences between China and India and explores that how these differences affects the Diaspora policies. Firstly, both India and China have engaged in economic reform policies, and the formation of their diaspora policies needs to be understood in relation to these policies. In both cases, rapid reform has meant rapid integration into the global economy and, consequently, rapidly rising emigration numbers. Both countries face a large diaspora (for the Chinese case, recent estimates are around 46 million; the Indian estimate is around 25 million, although some have argued that 20 million would be more realistic).

Secondly, both countries are of a vast size, thereby



**Dr. Els van Dongen**

facing challenges regarding political and cultural unity. Both countries are already confronted with the challenge of the existence of various nations within state borders, so the existence of an extra-territorial nation (or nations) poses extra challenges. It is therefore interesting to see how both countries deal with these challenges and how they transform them into policies. Thirdly, in terms of policies, a comparison is interesting because of the so-called “time lag”: economists would point out that there is a gap of 10 to 20 years between China and India in terms of economic development, but this gap is also present in terms of diaspora policies. China’s diaspora policy roughly goes back to 1978, but some institutions were first set up in 1949. In India, institutionalization only happened after 2000. India has referred to China’s diaspora policy as a successful example, which it has attributed not only to economic reform, but also to attractive policies. Given this element of reference, it is also worth looking at how Indian policy makers have referred to China and whether or not they have copied elements of Chinese policy.

Finally, in terms of the central focus of diaspora policies, it makes more sense to compare India to China than to group it together with other South Asian countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The latter three countries focus mostly on the welfare of workers

In both cases, the borders of inclusion and exclusion are changing in nature. Historically, in terms of the engagement with the diaspora, there are some interesting similarities between the two countries. First of all, in both cases the diaspora played a crucial role in the formation of the modern nation-state. Secondly, in both cases, citizenship laws were altered in the 1950s in the context of the international relations of the time and the political sensitivities that surrounded the presence of large diaspora populations in neighboring countries. In the 1980s, both countries loosened their emigration restrictions (however, India's engagement with the diaspora goes back to the late 1960s, whereas China only re-engaged with its diaspora in the late 1970s). As both countries have different nationality laws (*ius sanguinis* versus *ius solis*), to what extent does this difference influence their diaspora policies?

The changes in policy are reflected in changes in the specific terminology used by Chinese and Indian governments. In the case of China, between the 1950s and the 1980s, the term *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) referred to Chinese citizens who were sojourners abroad and who remained politically and culturally loyal to China. They were clearly distinguished from *huaren* or ethnic Chinese. After the 1980s, this distinction was blurred and a more inclusive approach was used instead. The Chinese diaspora was addressed as *huaqiao huaren* (Chinese overseas), which clearly referred to both citizens and ethnic Chinese. Finally, since the 1990s in particular, there was another move away from this distinction through the use of the more neutral term of "new migrants" (*xin yimin*). At the same time, however, this indicated a shift in attention to the Chinese diaspora in the industrialized countries of North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, as these were the main destination countries of the

"new migrants."

In the case of India, Indians overseas became "Overseas Indians" who were politically loyal to the countries of residence during the 1950s. Since then, this "hyphenated identity" became more explicit. In the new phase of reaching out since 1990s, the government has used the term "diaspora" and "Overseas Indians" almost interchangeably. The term "Diaspora" is used to refer to Indians who have migrated, but who have maintained their Indian identity. In spite of the inclusive use of the term, there is a clear division into NRIs and PIOs. One attempt at creating inclusiveness for PIOs can be seen from the introduction of the OCI card: the term "citizenship" is used, although the card does not grant voting rights (the latest development is the plan to merge OCI and PIO; the new card will be called Overseas Indian Card). As is the case in China, we can see a blurring of distinctions in favor of more general and inclusive terms. At the same time, in practice, certain groups are also privileged over others, such as the diaspora in the Gulf, and the "New Diaspora," which also consists of those in industrialized nations in particular (an example of which concerns the restrictive nature of dual citizenship).

The seminar concluded with the open-discussion in which various issues related to China's and India's diaspora policies has been discussed. Questions pertaining to how the Chinese and Indians involve into skill-diaspora, marriage-issues of Chinese Diaspora were debated. There were questions also related to new dynamics of nation-state and diaspora, how the institutional arrangement engages the diaspora. Dr. Dongen also touched upon issues on Neo-liberal policies in shaping policies on Diaspora all over the world. The seminar was concluded with vote of thanks by Dr Mahalingam.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Sorensen , Ninna Nyberg (2007), Living Across Worlds: Diaspora, Development and Transnational , Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, Pp. III + 207, ISBN 978-92-9068-404-6**

The book has compendium of research papers written by scholars who are drawn from different disciplines such as Sociology, development studies, International studies, Anthropologists and so on. The eight research papers are based on ethnography, case studies and narratives of the immigrants which are drawn from different geographical terrains of the world, but mainly focusing on immigrants from Latin American countries to Europe or U.S.A. The editor of the book starts with an introduction in which he says that the broad geographical outlook allows for a broader analysis of Diaspora formation, production of transnational social space, and the determinants of trans-

national engagements. He further adds that the possible positive and negative influences of such engagements on developing the countries or local communities within them are documented in the following eight chapters.

The first chapter discusses about contemporary definitions and conceptualizations of Diaspora. It has been argued that Diaspora does not emerge solely as a consequence of dispersion, common national ancestry, or simply any kind of connection. There is a process by which groups are motivated or influenced to become Diasporas. The author argues that the following criteria are essential such as- the level of community consciousness about the needs for a link with the homeland; whether the homeland government is encouraging diasporic identifications or links; the perception of emigrants by the society in the homeland and finally the relationship between homeland

and host governments. Such processes are demonstrated by using case studies of the different Central American migrant groups. Finally, one can infer that the 'context' is important apart from common origin and history for a migrant group to emerge as a diaspora.

The second chapter approaches the production of transnational social space through Henri Lefebvre's (1991) distinction between space as practiced, conceived and perceived. The author uses Mexican migration of 1910s to 1940s to the United States as a case study to theorize the production of transnational social space. The third chapter sets out to analyze the contradictory processes of the making and unmaking of transnational communities and diasporic identities. The author challenges the conventional concepts of diaspora and transnational community by using Burundian diaspora in Belgium as a case study. The author shows that the objective position of a diaspora in the host country is not only born out of ethnicity and time of arrival, but also depends on individual political maneuvering in the transnational political field shapes diasporic networks and determines the contents of transnational practices. The fourth chapter maps and examines the determinants of transnational engagements among Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica. It is demonstrated that Diaspora as platform for politics as well as location of change. The chapter further shows the evidence of a new transnational political field of action that has to be taken into account in the current political landscape.

The fifth chapter discusses about the transnational engagement of 'return Diaspora' in the homeland with the help of case study of Somali Diaspora and shows the process of 'getting local' as well as about recognition, power relations, opportunities, nation building and gender in the homeland. The sixth chapter challenges the notion of 'return' as a migratory practice and develops the concept of 'revolving returnees' to capture the dynamics between an ideology of return and final homecomings on the one side, and mobile migratory practice on the other. The chapter also explains why 'revolving returnees' maintain continued forms of mobility between Somaliland and the West, and concludes that people need networks, knowledge, money and documents to be able to 'circulate' between Somaliland and the West. The chapter also tells you that the Somalis are prime example of what Roger Rouse called a 'transnational migrant circuit' that is maintained through the circulation of people, money, goods and information (Rouse, 1991:15).

The seventh chapter analyzes transnational family life among Latin American migrants in Europe. The chapter

criticizes that the previous studies tend to look at transnational migration as larger processes of cross-border family relations, but have largely failed to address more closely micro-social processes-such as family formation and family transformation-beyond the simple description of continuous connections across borders. The article argues that one has to go beyond 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003) which should be substituted with 'methodological regionalism' (page no: 169). The final eighth chapter explains the migration experiences of Peruvians. It argues that the decisions to emigrate as well as the choice of destination countries are determined by migrant's previous migratory experience and economic and social status in Peruvian society. It has been argued that migrants construct different notions of home in response to the context of reception in their new settings as well as their previous migration experience. The chapter cautions that the policy makers should take into account the dynamics of migratory experiences while framing the policy. In the conclusion, it has an overview of all the research papers and gives food for thoughts for policy makers and practitioners to engage with Diaspora effectively.

The main criticism of the book is that every research papers is intercepted with abstracts of the research papers which are not necessary, because there are abstracts of each chapter in the introduction section itself. Further, the authors of each chapter, while discussing about transnational engagements with the homeland, they should have made a comparison or reference to Indian or Chinese diaspora who are well-known engaged diasporas with the homeland. The other major criticism could be that though the authors of each chapter from different discipline, they have not used much of their respective discipline's concepts. All of them focus on the concepts namely development and transnationalism, of course, the concepts like social capital and cultural capital have been used in the fifth chapter for analysis. None of the research papers discusses about macro level impact on a nation state. Instead, all of them focus on micro level impact on community, region or family. Further, none of the research papers provide any kind of statistical data or details about the remittance to homeland. Of course, it is a qualitative analysis, but, it could have been better if there had been quantitative analysis while discussing about remittance flow at least in the first chapter. Over all, it can be said that it is a value addition in the growing body of Diaspora literature and scholarship.

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**Reviewed by Dr. M. Mahalingam, Research Fellow, Centre For Policy Analysis, New Delhi. Email: [lingabharathi@gmail.com](mailto:lingabharathi@gmail.com)**

**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](mailto:editor@grfdt.com)**

### There has definitely been a tremendous change to the role that women play within the diaspora : **Dr. Shanthini Pillai**

**There has definitely been a tremendous change to the role that women play within the diaspora. The space for both physical and social mobility for women within the contemporary diaspora has tripled from that of their nineteenth century counterparts,** says **Dr. Shanthini Pillai**, Director of Research and Development for the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) in an interview with **Dr. Sadananda Sahoo**, Editor, Roots and Routes.



**You have been working on a range of issues related to language, literature and diaspora. How do you think about the role of language in the construction of diaspora?**

This is dependant on the context within which language is placed. When seen within the context of the retention of the communal language by the diaspora of classical imperialism, it is often a fossilized form of its form in the nineteenth century. When seen within the context of the link between the diaspora and its ancestral land in present times, it often becomes a marker of difference. The Malaysian Tamil who visits modern day Chennai might very well be identified as foreign based on different modulations and intonations of the language. Then there is also the issue of the generational distancing from the communal language among with the younger generations, who might only retain a dormant knowledge of the language, which ultimately leads to its shadow presence. Ultimately however, the role that language plays would depend on the role of India in the lives of diaspora, whether she is still a homeland or an ancestral land. For when it is the former, the aspects of language retention are often predominantly seen in ritualistic and cultural contexts. If the country of domicile has replaced India as its homeland, then the retention of the ancestral language might well be nativised into local contexts, thus revealing too the syncretic nature of diasporic identity. It is this latter that informs most of my work on the Malaysian Indian diaspora.

**Do you find there is increasing interest among diaspora to learn the literature and language from India these days?**

Looking at it from the context of Malaysia, I would say that the interest lies more in learning classical and Carnatic music and dance. I cannot say that there is no interest to learn the language among the Malaysian Indian community, as some families do engage personal tutors of the Language for their children. I would also say that the expansion of Indian channels on the local Satellite television network also plays an informal role in developing the use of the Tamil language. I must clarify here that most of the programmes that cater for the Malaysian Indian community on the Satellite television network are mainly Tamil, with Telegu and Malayalam interspersed in the margins. Other programmes like Zee TV, which are Hindi based, are targeted not only at the minority group of North Indians among the Malaysian Indian diaspora but also the Malay community, with its penchant for "Hindustani" culture that reaches far back to the 1950s. However, I would say that there is an increasing interest in terms of engagement with India appears to be on commercial grounds, with a burgeoning of transnational enterprises, especially of in the creative and cultural sectors.

I cannot say that there is no interest to learn the language among the Malaysian Indian community, as some families do engage personal tutors of the Language for their children. I would also say that the expansion of Indian channels on the local Satellite television network also plays an informal role in developing the use of the Tamil language.

### **Can the Indian diaspora be viewed from a subaltern perspective?**

It certainly can, as long as social class and regional affiliation still reside within the diaspora. These create concentric circles of domination and subordination, visibility and invisibility, voice and voicelessness. These can take place within a particular community in a specific locale, for instance the Malaysian Indian community of which I am part of, or between regional locality, of perhaps between the overtly represented Indian diaspora in the Metropolitan as well as the Caribbean islands and the Indian diaspora in the Asian regions. New contexts of subalternity are also evident in the Gulf Indian diaspora and their similarities with the plight of the indenture experience of the Old Diaspora of nineteenth century imperialism. As such, the condition of subalternity is still a strong spectre within the diaspora.

### **How do you contextualize the role of diaspora women in the society? Do you think there have been any substantial changes in the gender role as compared to colonial times as well as in comparison to present day India?**

There has definitely been a tremendous change to the role that women play within the diaspora. The space for both physical and social mobility for women within the contemporary diaspora has tripled from that of their nineteenth century counterparts. There are also numerous diasporic women scholars and creative writers who are actively contributing to highlighting the various experiences of gender within the diasporic context. However, and this is

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tyed to the previous point of subalternity, the experience of women within the diaspora, is heterogeneous in nature and subsumed within this heterogeneous experience are the subaltern conditions of patriarchal hegemony that may still exist, whether overtly or covertly as well as class division and its rendering of many women to the margins even as their more socially elevated sisters rise up the ladder of success. This applies also to the comparison with India. A woman who occupies the higher rungs of the social ladder in modern day India may well have more agency than a woman in the lower rungs in the Metropolitan diaspora. It all really depends on context and social elevation and feminist agency.

### **As a diasporic scholar, how would you perceive about on the challenges on working on South Asian diaspora?**

One of the greatest challenges for me has been the investigation of the early migrants to Malaya in the communal memory of Malaysia. A significant part of this is tied to the word 'coolie' and its association. Dissenting voices constantly highlight that it is a word that is volatile and that it should not make its way into my scholarship. However, my counter argument has always been that the word is tied to imperialist and classist sign systems that have saturated its frame as a linguistic signifier of dearth and paucity interlaced within this significant historical folk figure of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia.

Another challenge that I have faced is the hegemony of scholarly representations of a homogenous view of the experience of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia as one of a deeply resonant space of angst and exile. Many choose only to highlight the web of an inextricable dilemma of a failure of belonging and acceptance within Malaysia. While I do not dispute the fact that this is a valid point of contention, I do wonder whether these articulations pander to the hegemony of a heavy handed reading of the politics of discrimination within the country. For even as many highlight these, they often forget the concentric circles of subalternity within communal grounds, of class and regional affiliations. Even contemporary Malaysian Indian writers that now reside outside Malaysia, forming a diaspora of the Malaysian Indian diaspora, reveals such nuances of classist representations that echo colonialist representations of the disenfranchised Indian immigrant. Perhaps what is necessary is a heterogeneous notion of the Indian diaspora, and the many facets of nation and belonging, of unhomeliness and syncretism. My preference has always been to focus on the former and this is often missing from many scholarly writings on the South Asian diaspora of Malaysia.

Another challenge is the access to a wider range of scholarly network when working from within South East Asia. Research meetings and conferences often take place in the Metropolitan and this may sometimes pose problems for scholars working in Asia.

### **Tell us something about your book "Colonial vision, post- colonial revisions: Images of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia". How does the post colonial revisioning (as your book title suggest) help to reconstruct the Indian diaspora in Malaysia?**

The book, which emerged out of my Phd thesis, focuses on repositioning and thus revisioning the established tables of value judgments of the nineteenth century Indian labour migrant (or "coolie" as they were known then) population of Malaya. It accomplished this through firstly reading colonial archival documents against the grain, laying bare the moments in which the seemingly smooth countenance of colonial control is fractured by undercurrent of tensions in the encounter with its seemingly subordinate labour force. In so doing it revisioned the signifier of passivity of the Indian coolie, showing that it was a trait that had to be manoeuvred and manipulated by the colonial parties. The book then moved on to show how colonial planters too revealed such dissenting scenes, as they reveal, through narrative irony and comic humour, the effort that was required for the planters to keep their labour force well within the boards of imperial control, as every so often, they would present the coolies crossing boundary lines and claiming more space than what was prescribed for them. Thus this revisioned again the signifier of the malleable coolie. Most significant about the book though was the integration of a significant voice from within the Malaysian Indian diaspora, KS Maniam, the community's pioneer writer of creative fiction in English. Here, drawing from an allegorical framework formulated on three motifs from Maniam's works, Lord Nataraja the Cosmic Dancer, the Indian caballa-like artform of the kolam and the South Indian architectural form of the thinnai or verandah, I show how the representation of the pioneer diasporic Indians in Malaysia reterritorialised the vestiges of ancestral culture-scapes in new soil and revealed the strength of transfigurative power, and thus work to revision the oft repeated refrain of exile that normally accompanies the works of many critics.

### **Can we draw any parallel among Indian diaspora in other countries where your book would throw some light?**

There are definitely many parallels with the Indo-Caribbean diaspora. As a matter of fact, the seeds for my Phd thesis were sown as I worked on my Masters thesis on the Indo-Caribbean diaspora, for I was struck by the many similarities, especially with regard to issues of hybridity and the syncretism of different cultures. Parallels can be drawn between the early works of Indo-Caribbean writer Sam Selvon and the works of KS Maniam, set as they are within the colonialist plantation context. Both writers reveal diasporic Indian characters who reach out towards the land of domicile, instead of merely focusing on the angst of exile and the fossilized Motherland of India.

### **Do you think the Indian media and film industry have shown increasing engagement with the diaspora? How do you see this in the Malaysian context?**

There certainly has been an increase in India's engagement with its diaspora in Malaysia within the context of the media and film. Malaysia now appears quite frequently in the South Indian or Kollywood productions such as Polladavan, Sivi, Kanden and Kurivi. Music artistes such as Yogi B and Dr Burn too have become notable figures in music scenes from the movies. A number of movies have also shown the Malaysian Indian rappers rapping in their national language Malay and this is a significant signifier of the interpolation of the diaspora from margin to centre. Yogi B has made a number of appearances in broadcast advertisements in South India, and both he and Dr Burn as well as other newer artistes are now familiar figures in the line up of star performers at South India's numerous media industry award ceremonies. These thus point to the revisioning of the relationship between India and its diaspora in Malaysia, as both become partners on a global scale.

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### **Do you also find the increasing interest among diasporic music and film industry having interest on India?**

I believe this is more rampant among the music industry, than it is in the film industry. For while many Malaysian Indian rap artistes are now looking towards India for recognition and collaboration, the movie industry remains localized. However this said, there is a tendency for local media producers to appropriate entertainment shows from India and localize them into Malaysian contexts. Some have also begun to feature South Indian artistes as judges. This certainly reveals a burgeoning of interest within the world of media. The world of film however remains to be seen.

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**Shanthini Pillai**, Phd is Associate Professor at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Malaysia (UKM). Her research interests are anchored primarily in diaspora and transnationalism in literary and cultural texts with particular reference to the global South Asian diaspora. She is author of *Colonial Visions, Postcolonial Revisions: Images of the Indian diaspora of Malaysia* (2007) as well as numerous articles in various journals of Literary Studies. She is also a recipient of the 2006-2007 Australia-Malaysia Institute Fellowship, as well as the 2013 Asia Research Institute Visiting Senior Fellowship, and is currently Director of Research and Development for the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA).

## Gandhi and Indian Diaspora

Ambassador J.C. Sharma\*

As a mass leader, Gandhi's principles have always fostered communal harmony, international relations and understanding, and protest against colonial and racial discrimination. Diaspora too is yet another domain where Gandhi's contribution and relevance cannot be overlooked. Gandhi has been one of the key figures in the making of Indian diaspora and so also the diaspora in the making of Gandhi. Gandhi's major weapon of revolution "Satyagrah" was experimented in the diaspora (South Africa) and, at the same time, his satyagrah success story in India permeated to several diasporic countries across the globe. His concept of non-violent resistance to tyranny has influenced the struggle for freedom elsewhere: in Eastern Europe, in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and the Soviet Union. Shortly before Gandhiji's death in May 1947, Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, the South African Asians, visited Gandhiji and he told them, "The slogan today is no longer merely 'Asia for the Asians' or 'Africa for the Africans' but the unity of all the oppressed races of the earth." Thus, Mahatma Gandhi has always been prevalent as a role model, homeland connector, crusader of anti-colonialism, an iconic Indian and freedom fighter amongst the Indian diaspora worldwide. Ironically, however, Gandhi has not been emphasized sufficiently in our theory and praxis of Diaspora as compared to other areas of discourse. It is in this connection, the study of 'Gandhi and Indian diaspora' owes its relevance today in order to discuss: Why Gandhi and Indian diaspora is so important? What is the significance of diaspora in Gandhi and vice versa? However, to understand the role of Mahatma Gandhi from diasporic perspective, we need to discuss various dimensions of his overseas life and contributions.

### Gandhi's South African Connection

After returning from London in 1891, and having some law practice in Rajkot and Bombay, Gandhi went to South Africa with a contract of one year (Tendulkar 1951). While in South Africa, he learned that the Indians in Natal province were just about to lose their right to vote. Gandhi decided to stay on to take up the Indian cause by forming the Natal Indian Congress. It was in South Africa that Gandhiji had realized his commitment in life. He invented and practised satyagraha there; his philosophy of life even his attitude to the social problems of India crystallized there. For Gandhiji, the issue was not only the specific grievances of the Indians but their individual and national self-respect. The satyagraha here was a part of the struggle of India for its dignity, and a moral crusade, though waged on the South African soil. When, Dr. Y. M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, leaders of the passive resistance movement in South Africa, met Gandhiji on April

11, 1947, he confessed to them thus: "Truly speaking, it was after I went to South Africa that I became what I am now. My love for South Africa and my concern for her problems are no less than for India..." (Item 233) Therefore, in 1928, commenting on a report that some Indians in South Africa favoured separation from Africans in education, Gandhiji wrote in *Young India* on April 5, 1928: "Indians have too much in common with the Africans to think of isolating themselves from them. They cannot exist in South Africa for any length of time without the active sympathy and friendship of the Africans. . . . and it would be a tragedy if any such movement were to gain ground among the Indian settlers of South Africa." Thus, Gandhi's South African experiment is a great message to the Indian diaspora elsewhere.

### Gandhi in Mauritius

In 1924, as the President of the Indian National Congress, the Mahatma referred to the inhumane treatment of the indentured Indians in Mauritius. Between the 1910s and 1940s, Mahatma Gandhi came in touch with several Mauritians such as R. K. Boodhun, P. Lutchmaya, J. N. Roy and B. Bissoondoyal. He encouraged them to work for the social, political and economic betterment of all Mauritians. In 1970, Mahatma Gandhi Institute was established in Mauritius as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. During the past sixty years, there has been a rich and important tradition of celebrating the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi (October 2, 1869 – January 30, 1948). In October 2001, the centenary anniversary of the visit of Gandhiji to Mauritius was commemorated at a national level. Today, it is widely known and accepted among the Mauritians that the visit of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has had a long-lasting impact on their country's history.

### Gandhi and the indentured Indians in Fiji

Similarly in Fiji, Gandhi was very sensitive towards the indentured system as well as the ill-treatment of indentured labourers. As K. A. Ray observed "Historically, for almost 50 years after the beginning of indentured migration in 1834, neither the colonial government of India nor the general population had been particularly concerned about the maltreatment of Indian indentured workers abroad. It was only Gandhi's threat of a nationwide satyagraha (passive resistance) which brought end to recruitment in 1917 (Ray 1993: 283). This resulted in the termination of indentured system in 1920. However, this incident became significant as C. Voigt-Graf observed that "once indenture was abolished, though, the mainstream of Indian national politics lost interest in the Indian diaspora" (2004: 185).

## Gandhi as the social and political capital of Diaspora

Mahatma Gandhi is not just the face of modern India, but is the most influential icon for the diaspora today which cut across the communities and ideological barriers. As Mr. Vinay Lal observes, "Gandhi's name evidently has cultural capital everywhere in the world. . ." There are many research institutions, cultural centres, social organizations in the name of Mahatma Gandhi in almost all the countries having diaspora presence. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) have also complied with the diasporas' demand for Gandhi's presence through instituting institutions, installing statues and other forms of promotions. In Guyana Cheddi Jagan is considered as Guyana's Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute Indian Immigration Archives is undoubtedly the largest repository documentation and photographic collection of the 19th Century Indian Indentured Labourers recruited in Mauritius. Similarly, The Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Cooperation, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago is the platform for promoting India and diaspora relations.

## Gandhi, Contemporary India and Diaspora

The High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora constituted by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government of India also proposed to hold annual celebrations called "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas" in honour of the Indian diaspora to ensure its sustained interaction with India. The significance of Gandhiji again came to the forefront when the organizers decided to organize the event on the day of Gandhiji's return from South Africa. Moreover, the recent anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in India also had its influence among the diaspora youth because of its Gandhian principles. The Dandi march of San Francisco in support of Anna's fast on April 9, 2011 and afterwards is quite significant. These NRIs had a 240 mile walk against corruption and urged for one-day fast in several cities across US. The details are available in the facebook.

## Conclusion

In the British colonies and settlements, Gandhian methods of protest have always been worked out. Gandhi's adaptations has wielded these methods of fasting, dharma, into dramatic and effective methods of political opposition as seen in South Africa and then across the Indian subcontinent. From Gujarat to Africa, he drew the financial, cultural, organizational, and geographic bases to launch his political operations into a global scale. With his multifaceted life, Gandhi has highly influenced different diaspora communities worldwide. With certain considerations, then we can identify Mahatma Gandhi as a first person to integrate the scattered Indians world-wide. In fact, Gandhi has made the 'Indian Diaspora' more prominently be part of public interest in India. Thus, Gandhi has been one of the monumental figures who will be always be part of the foreign policy, community life, cultur-

al and political activities in India and abroad. He is the most important link between the mother country and her diaspora.

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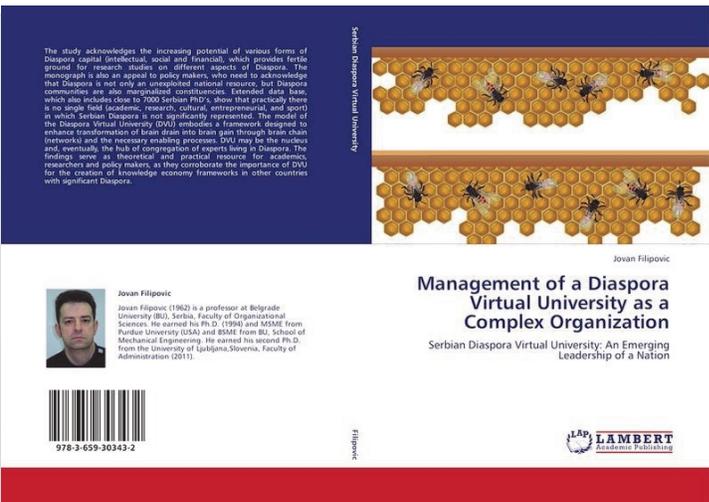
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## New Books on Diaspora

### Management of a Diaspora Virtual University as a Complex Organization *Serbian Diaspora Virtual University: An Emerging Leadership of a Nation*

Book Details: ISBN-13: 978-3-659-30343-2  
ISBN-10: 3659303437  
EAN: 9783659303432  
Book language: English  
LAP Lambert Academic Publishing ( 2012-12-03 )

Blurb/Shorttext: The study acknowledges the increasing potential of various forms of Diaspora capital (intellectual, social and financial), which provides fertile ground for research studies on different aspects of Diaspora. The monograph is also an appeal to policy makers, who need to acknowledge that Diaspora is not only an unexploited national resource, but Diaspora communities are also marginalized constituencies. Extended data base, which also includes close to 7000 Serbian PhD's, show that practically there is no single field (academic, research, cultural, entrepreneurial, and sport) in which Serbian Diaspora is not significantly represented. The model of the Diaspora Virtual University (DVU) embodies a framework designed to enhance transformation of brain drain into brain gain through brain chain (networks) and the necessary enabling processes. The conceptual framework of DVU developed in the thesis is an outgrowth of a thorough understanding of its constituent concepts: "Diaspora",



"management", "virtual", "knowledge", "complexity", "networks and meshworks" and "social capital". DVU may be the nucleus and, eventually, the hub of congregation of experts living in Diaspora. The findings serve as theoretical and practical resource for academics, researchers and policy makers, as they corroborate the importance of DVU for the creation of knowledge economy frameworks in other countries with significant Diaspora.

## Jains In India And Abroad *A Sociological Introduction*

Author: Prakash C. Jain  
ISBN 10: 8186715797  
ISBN 13: 9788186715796  
Publisher: International School for Jain Studies  
Place: New Delhi, India  
Date published: 2011

The Book profiles the salient demographic as well as sociological features of the Jain Communities in india and abroad. One of the oldest religious communities, the jain have been a minority community consisting of less than one percent of India's total population in modern times. The current population of Jain is estimated around 5.0 Million.

Besides demography and diaspora, the other aspects of the Jain community that are highlighted in the book are: religion, philosophy and the Jain way of life; social organi-

zational features such as sects, caste, family and marriage; food, festivals and pilgrimage; memory status, economic and political status; inter ethnic relations; and the Jains' contribution to Indian culture and society. While outlining a sociology of the Jain community, a wide range of areas for further research have been suggested.

**Prakash C Jain** is professor (Sociology) at the school of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Racial Discrimination against overseas Indian: A Class analysis (1990), Indians in South Africa: Political Economy of Race Relations (1999), Population and Society in West Asia (2001) and Non-Residents Indian Entrepreneurs in the United Arab Emirates (2010) are his major authored Books.

# GLOBAL UPDATE

## Indian Diaspora is the largest ethnic Group in UK

The latest census report released on 11 December 2012 by the Office for National Statistics 2011 revealed some interesting facts on the demographic compositions of the UK. The section "Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales" revealed that Indian diaspora is the largest ethnic group in the UK and Hinduism with 1.5 per cent of the population is the third most popular religion in the country.

UK has been the favourite destination for the Indians since colonial times. During the post colonial period several Indian people also migrated from earthwhile colonies to the U.K rather than to India. After independence UK consistently retain the favourite destination for workers and students a line. In a recent estimate by the As per estimates of Indian missions in 29 European countries there are about 5,00,000 Indian workers and 39,000 students in the UK, followed 70,248 workers in Italy, 42,500 in Germany, 34,130 in Spain and 19,250 in the

Netherlands. Indian workers in Greece, Russia and Switzerland totalled about 33,000. Thus the cumulative figure positions Indian community as the largest ethnic group in UK.

The census report also revealed some interesting facts. The immigrant population of England and Wales went up by nearly three million over the past decade to 7.5 million people. The most common birthplaces outside the UK are from India, Poland and Pakistan. Another interesting fact is related to the decreasing number of Christians as a quarter of Britons said they had no religion. The Christian religion figures 33.2 million, down from 37.3 million in 2001 which makes it 59 per cent of the population. Nearly twenty-five per cent of people said they had no faith, up from 14.8 per cent a decade earlier. Islam became the fastest growing religion in the country. The proportion of Muslims rose from 3.0 per cent to 4.8 per cent between 2001 to 2011.

## CALL FOR PAPERS - Friendship and the Convivial City

Date: 05 Sep 2013 - 06 Sep 2013

Venue: FASS Research Division Seminar Room (06-42)  
National University of Singapore @ Kent Ridge  
AS7 Shaw Foundation Bldg, 5 Arts Link

CALL FOR PAPERS (DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2013)

This workshop is jointly organised by Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity; Cities Research Cluster at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore.

Abstracts of 200 words, together with names, email addresses

and affiliations of presenters, are to be submitted to [kathiravelu@mmg.mpg.de](mailto:kathiravelu@mmg.mpg.de) no later than 1 March 2013.

Selected participants will be notified by the end of March 2013. Short papers of between 3,000-4,000 words are expected by mid-August 2013. Revised full papers incorporating insights from the workshop are expected by December 2013, as a condition of being funded to attend.

Workshop organizers aim to fund all travel for participants from the Asian region, and partial travel expenses for other participants. Accommodation for the duration of the workshop in Singapore will be provided for all workshop participants.

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS DALITS AND MIGRATION ABROAD

To gain an understanding of Dalits and their migration experience abroad, the India Centre for Migration (ICM), a think tank on behalf of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) invites proposals from scholars, subject experts and research institutions in India. Applicants are requested to include the following for consideration in their research proposal:

- Topic/theme and objectives;
- Methodology proposed for research and data sources;
- Time required to complete the study;
- Costs involved in conducting the proposed study;
- CV of proposed author(s), with indication of previous rele-

vant personal or institutional work in the field.

The research questions raised in the present note are only indicative. Applicants are encouraged to explore other questions related to the subject theme. The last date for submission of research proposals is January 31st 2013. The research proposals may be sent to [dalitsandmigration@gmail.com](mailto:dalitsandmigration@gmail.com). The selection of proposals shall be made by end of February 2013. Research for selected proposals shall be commissioned through ICM.

**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.**