

Roots and Routes

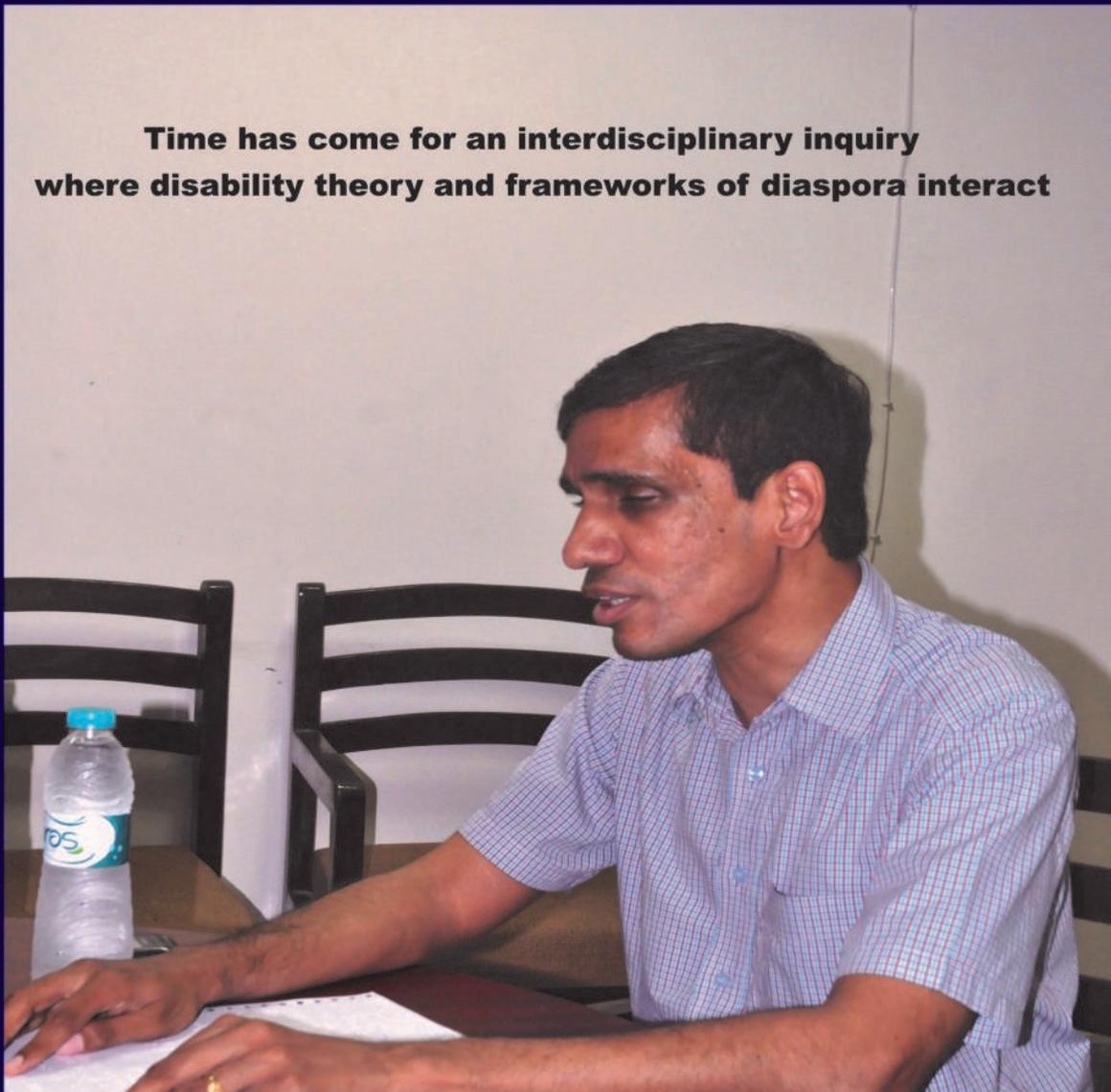
Monthly Newsletter of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism

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GRFDT
Global Research Forum on
Diaspora and Transnationalism

**Time has come for an interdisciplinary inquiry
where disability theory and frameworks of diaspora interact**



Roots and Routes disseminates the latest information
on research and policy developments in Diaspora
and transnationalism

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Editor's Message



We are not students of some subject matter, but students of problems. And problems may cut right across the borders of any subject matter or discipline
- Karl Popper

In the age of knowledge revolution, we face challenges of interdisciplinary research arising out of social, cultural, and conceptual barriers. There is serious problem of exclusion in terms of integrating various knowledge domains arising out of these and influencing the inquiring frames. This exclusion seriously affects the investigation and experiment leading to skewed knowledge generation. As the society is becoming more complex, there is need for better synergy among inquiring minds. Problems may cut across border. To address them we too need borderless minds. How do we go ahead when the borders are created by the lack of integration among researchers themselves? The closure of border can be noticed between the idea of sightedness and blindness in the research environment

How do blind people relate to a diasporic existence? Is the experience any different from those of the sighted? Perhaps, our imagination of diasporic existence is primarily informed by the sighted majority. GRFDT monthly seminar on "Ved Mehta's Continent of Blind Culture: Challenges in reading the narrative domain using conventional frameworks in diasporic theory", a talk by Dr. Hemachandran Karah, Faculty at The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies brought out many new issues which are not conventionally thought of. He mentioned that Mehta's continents of exile can help us explore diasporic consciousness with a keen sensitivity for the sensory. The insights from these certainly help us to revisit the diasporic theories.

The issue has an article on "Diasporic Consciousness in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee" written by Sai Diwan. She narrates how the diasporic imaginary is torn between the dual and often conflicting ideologies of the homeland and the host land. The issue contains an interview with Savitri Sawhney, writer of the book "I shall Never Ask for Pardon: A Memoir of Pandurang Khankhoje" published by Penguin India in 2008 based on the Gadar movement in the diaspora. The issue also has a book review by Abhay Chawla on "Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement". News on various policies and development issues on diaspora are featured here. ■

Sadananda Sahoo

GRFDT Seminar

We live in the world of senses, Home or Abroad

"Ved Mehta's Continent of Blind Culture: Challenges in reading the narrative domain using conventional frameworks in diasporic theory", a talk by Dr. Hemachandran Karah, Faculty at The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi was held on 22 June 2013 at CSSS, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The talk was based on 'Continent of Blind Culture', a narrative domain in Ved Mehta's autobiography. As a sensorium, the Continent of blind culture binds together rest of the narrative domains, also known as Continents. These are the Continents of India, Britain, America, The New Yorker, a psychoanalysis. Clearly, the Continent signifies much more than a lexical definition. It signifies a social scape, a cultural event, memory, the craft of writing, and at times, a geographical mass.

The Continent of blind culture or culture of the blind signifies lived experiences of the narrator and his blind colleagues amidst the realms of the visual. Immersed in the scopic, the Continent emerges as a narrative derivative of the real system of blind culture which itself is an inferior binary of visual culture that treats blindness as a lack, and an inferior episteme to sightedness. The Continent of blind culture binds together all the other five narrative domains of the autobiographical compendium in this capacity as a narrative derivative of the binary of blind culture which seems to go with the visual in all possible directions. The Continent appears intertwined with the binary system of blind cultures that are implicated within the visual systems of empiricism, the literary form of the essay, the Hindu and Greek cosmologies, rehabilitation technology, blind psychology, Arya Samaj, and Freudianism.

Blind culture mediates the notions of home, exile, and cosmopolitanism in Mehta's writings. The mediation is such that it can offer valuable feedback on the ways in which the terms are deployed in diasporic theory. The idea of home for example, denotes a sensory world where Mehta is free from ocular surveillance. It is also a place where he is in touch with the feminine cosmos of his mother. Naturally, such a location is consistently reconstructed by the author. Like exile, home signifies an enduring conscious of an ideal place that is somehow lost during migration. In Mehta's case, it manifests as a sensorium where he no longer feels subjected to by an alien institutional setting. This is something diasporic theory can reflect upon. After all, we live in the world of senses, home or abroad.



Dr. Hemachandran Karah

Being detested and celebrated alike, states of deprivation and discontent continue to serve Mehta as his primary narrative resources. Among other things, deprivation signifies lack of sight, abrupt loss of childhood serenity, loss of ego independence, lack of sexual satisfaction, institutional confinement and the very sense of uprootedness that comes with global mobility. The deprivation of blindness even feels like a mark of divine retribution, for the narrator believes that he lost his sight because of a sacrilegious act that he is supposed to have committed by chance during his early childhood. Thus, a general sense of dissatisfaction, displeasure and discontent predominates in Mehta's lives of exile. The passing thought that the life of exile in, say, America is preferable to life in India does not hold good for long. At every point Mehta realises that one set of circumstances of estrangement is always replaced by another and is never completely overcome. His psychoanalytic experience only expands this view to include even serenity as an exilic experience in itself. Thus, exile in Mehta's writings signifies experiences of deprivation and discontent that cannot be stated in simple and straightforward terms.

So what does Mehta's notion of exile means for people like us who are concerned about diasporic consciousness? Well, first and foremost, we can borrow the idea of

deprivation and discontent. Also, we can make use of his critique of the visual which can indeed alienate each of us whether or not one is blind. Talking about access to the image, I am concerned about a different form of isolation ethic which is slowly gaining social legitimacy; especially among those who seek an identity based on an attachment to an image.

Mehta's version of cosmopolitanism oscillates between a jetsetting dynamic and a cultural space that he carves out for himself within visual culture. Mehta emulates his father as a globe trotter and even aspires further. He flies to America at the age of 17 for his high school education at ASB. Mehta's own image as a globe trotter is well displayed in *Face to Face*, his debut. All in all, he flies 14 times across the United States and gets to visit 38 states. Further, he chooses to do an undergraduate degree at Oxford so that he is able to get into the cosmopolitan circles of Oxford life. He joins Pomona College for a BA degree and Harvard University for a Masters in history for the same reason. Sometimes he appears like a tourist whose vocation is the consumption of the exotic. At others, he is an interviewer whose travel itinerary extends far and wide. Yet in others, he seems like a celebrity figure who has overcome all the limitations and parochialities of his childhood blindness. In *Walking the Indian Streets*, for example, Mehta looks more like a sighted visitor from Oxford than a blind writer who needs assistance in reaching the exotic. After ten years of study in England and America, Ved Mehta revisits his home in India in the summer of 1959. He is joined by his friend from Oxford, the poet Dom Moraes, and together they spend a full carefree month which he calls 'bummy' days in India and Nepal. At the end of his sojourn, Mehta interviews Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, with whom he has been in touch ever since his travel to America for schooling.

Many other volumes of interviews as in *Mahatma Gandhi and his Apostles* (1977), *The New Theologian* (1966) and *Fly and the Fly-Bottle* (1963) present the interviewer figure as a truly global subject who possesses non-partisan dispositions and views. In the book on the Mahatma, the interviewer emerges as a meritorious scholar who is well versed in Gandhian hagiography. He consults at least 400 of the biographical volumes then available on one or other aspect of the Mahatma and his holy pilgrimage towards truth and nonviolence. Mehta also spends several years travelling through India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, England, and Austria, among other places, to collect the oral testimony of living Gandhians. He describes the symbolic gestures of Gandhi that move Indians into action. He also describes, in the most precise particulars, the daily life in Gandhi's ashrams, the everyday behavior Gandhi expected of his followers and demanded of himself. The interviewer's probe into the subject of the Mahatma's celibacy is elaborate and yet sensitive. Mehta brings out in vivid detail, the embodied aspects of Gandhian celibacy, and the ways in which they relive in the memories of women who were very much part and parcel of the experiment. *The New Theologian* and *Fly*

and the *Fly-Bottle* also represent the interviewer as a global citizen. He traverses across diverse schools of philosophy in Europe and America. Whether it is linguistic philosophy or the classical theology of Karl Barth, the scholarly interviewer gives a dispassionate reportage of the arguments of each member of the interpretative communities; and in stunning detail their biographical portraits as well.

During these interviews, and others, the interviewer presents himself as someone who is very keen on the visual aspects of the situations of interviewing. He records in vivid detail, the physical appearance of his interviewees, the costumes they wear, and the ways in which they approach him as a blind interviewer. To access the minute details of the visual environments of interviewing, Mehta deploys facial vision, which is a skill that is associated with obstacle perception of the blind. After having cast the white cane in the gutter, Mehta traverses the streets of Arkansas by using facial vision. He negotiates with lampposts, bypassers, and even unexpected crevices. With his mastery of the art and science of facial vision, Mehta achieves something that is normally not expected of the blind; especially, the ones that populate the Continent of India of his first identity.

Now that the blind narrator has cast away his mobility cane, he comes across as though he were sighted connoisseur of the visual with cosmopolitan aesthetic preferences. In fact, he begins to identify himself with the visual objects that he happens to consume. During his undergraduate days in Pomona College, Mehta gets on well with a model A Truck; by making use of facial vision, he drives the car around the college with windows wide opened. In this instance, and many others, the facial vision user dangerously moves across public spaces in a way that puts himself as much as others in utmost peril. Like a typical American cosmopolitan of his time, Mehta fashionably opts to go for psychoanalysis during the early 1970s. However, the underlying reasons why Mehta opted to go for psychoanalysis in the first place; to get married, to have a family of his own with wife and children, to own a house, to shape himself as a provider like Daddyji, and all that, continue to remain as distant goals. When he is in his early 50s, Mehta becomes a proper householder like Daddyji with his marriage to Lynn, as well as his construction of his own 'palace on sand'. Thus, Daddyji's resolve appears fulfilled: his son will be different from the rest of the blind in India who loaf around with their begging bowls and a staff in their hands. Also, Mehta, the cosmopolitan consumer appears more confident because he is unlikely to fall back into the life worlds of those who pass their entire lives rolling conditions and nuts in petty shops.

In sum, Mehta's continents of exile can help us explore diasporic consciousness with a keen sensitivity for the sensory. Notions of home, exile, and cosmopolitanism in Mehta's autobiography are but a few pointers in this regard. Time has come for an interdisciplinary inquiry where disability theory and frameworks of diaspora interact. ■

Diasporic Consciousness in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee

Sai Diwan

The sociological implications of Diaspora have been incorporated into literature to produce a flourishing genre in post modernism: Diasporic literature. Although the Greek etymology restricted itself to refer to the migration of Jews post the Holocaust, the term Diaspora now encompasses the experiences of the diasporic imaginary speckled all over the world. The Indian Diaspora has been chronicled by the likes of Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Agha Shahid Ali etc.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) revolves around a 17 year old widow's strife to comprehend her husband's romanticized conception of America and her parallel quest for identity. The ignorant village girl, Jyoti is married off to Prakash at an early age. Fuelled by radical ideas, Prakash denounces the feudal system and draws his wife into his envisioned democratic world by giving her the pseudo American name, Jasmine. This transformation introduces her to her husband's dream of the American life. Although she shares his dream, it is not her vision. Had she followed Prakash into his American dream, she would have been his mere shadow.

Jhumpa Lahiri's character, Hema traverses the fate that Jasmine escapes. For, second generation Bengali immigrants Hema and Kaushik, migration is not a matter of choice. As is the trend of the new Diaspora, Hema's parents move to Cambridge in search of better economic opportunities. She nurses no strong link with her 'homeland' and accepts her American nationality without dispute. For Kaushik, the second move to America is linked to his mother's impending death. Unlike in *Jasmine* where the 'Trauma' or 'Impossible Mourning' is the actual murder of Prakash, for Kaushik it is the consciousness of the inevitable. The trauma that triggers the move to America is the knowledge that his mother is to die.

Zizek's idea of the Nation as the 'Thing' can be used to justify the escapist behavior of the diasporic imaginary. Prakash's death breaks the illusion of an egalitarian society that he had created for Jasmine. She is stifled by the feudal structure of Hasnapur that shatters Prakash's claims of gender equality. Thus Jasmine sees America as her calling. She seeks America in her quest for a democratic society and realization of Prakash's envisioned world. She is charmed by the equal status that the women of American society enjoy. She sees her own standing as a notch above her position in India.

"In Hasnapur the Mazbi women who'd stoked our heart

or spread our flaking had been a maid servant. Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family, and I was a professional." (175)

For Jasmine, Mukherjee marks the clear transition by rechristening her, Jase. The 'Thing' gives her an independent and adventurous identity. Lahiri's character Parul (Kaushik's mother) covets the liberation that the Thing promises. She chooses to spend her last days away from her land of birth In America, she wants to create a world wherein she is healthy and happy with her family. This echoes Frederic Jameson's view as given by Simon Gikandi in his essay *Globalization and The Claims of Postcoloniality*.

The sense people have of themselves and their own moment of history may ultimately have nothing whatsoever to do with its reality. (113)

It gives her an opportunity to begin afresh, without the weight of restrictions that she carried in India. However, the same experiment does not work well for her son. The recurrent displacements during his formative years leave him with an inability to form permanent relationships. Although he falls in love with Hema, he cannot bring himself to commit to her. He is on a constant search for his identity.

This is true of most experiences of the diasporic imaginary. The literature of Diaspora entails characters that find themselves in the search for their true identity. This loss of identity arises from their need to 'belong' to a place.

"I envy them, that." Hema said

"Do you?"

"I've never belonged to any place that way"

Kaushik laughed. "You're complaining to the wrong person." (320)

The diasporic imaginary is torn between the dual and often conflicting ideologies of the homeland and the host land. The vast boundaries of the Western society are a space too huge for the constraints of the Indian culture. The vacuum that thus remains makes them pose the inevitable question 'Where do I belong?' In his essay *Imaginary Homelands* Salman Rushdie has addressed the identity crisis of the Indian Diaspora:

Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools. (227)

The issue of the identity crisis has been cradled by Lahiri through effective citation of multiculturalism. Interpreter of *Maladies* (1999) deals with stories of Indian Americans and the conflict between their inherited culture and the New World that their hyphenated identity causes. In some stories like *Mrs Sen's* the characters cling to the Indian culture without attempting to assimilate in the New World. In *The Namesake* (2003), Gogol lets go of his inherited culture to assume an American identity.

The search for identity has been best enumerated by Bharati Mukherjee in *Jasmine*. Jyoti, the vulnerable teenager is nudged on to become Jasmine. The free American society makes Jasmine the bold Jase. However, accosted by love, Jase flees to Iowa to become the cautious Jane Ripplemeyer.

Jyoti of Hasnapur was not Jasmine, Duff's day mummy and Taylor and Wylie's *au pair* in Manhattan; *that* Jasmine isn't *this* Jane Ripplemeyer having lunch with Mary Webb at the Univeristy Club today. (127)

Diasporic literature is strained with the imperative presence of melancholia. This stems from the concept of home. As much as Jase or Jane does not want to go back to being Jyoti, memories of Hasnapur flood her mind. The Trauma of the death of her husband is the principal trigger to her migration and sows the seeds of nostalgia for India in her. However, the melancholia does not evoke any wish to return to her homeland. Jasmine solely wishes to return home. The question is where lies home, and what is home? Is it the physical space one inhabits or the symbolic conceptualization of where one belongs? Jasmine flees to Iowa, and is pregnant with Bud Ripplemeyer's child. However, she cannot bring herself to make a home with him. For her, home is Manhattan, with the sweet innocence of Duff and the quiet promises of Taylor.

For second generation immigrants, home is quite a dilemma. They cannot relate their diasporic experiences to their own memories of a time before migration. Their memories of the 'homeland' are fragmented.

Hema: 'I didn't know what to make of you. Because you had lived in India, I associated you more with my parents than with me.'

For Hema, it happens to be Rome. Born in Cambridge, she has no intimate association with India. America gives her a nationality, but she strikes her roots in Rome, drawing from it on each visit, knowledge of her self. The reader finds Hema congregate her life in Rome: the past, the present and the future; her escapade with Julian, her involvement with Kaushik and the anxiety of the arrangement with Navin.

The metaphor of 'roots into unaccustomed earth' is especially applicable to Kaushik. Since his mother's death, he

attempts to remove himself from every place that had felt her presence. He convinces himself that 'As a photographer his origins were irrelevant.' The only place that comes to matter to him is the Rome he toured with Hema. As if to reiterate his belief, fate washes over his design to take up permanent residence in Hong Kong.

The culmination of both books is beautifully crafted. *Jasmine* breaks away from the conventional structure of Diaspora and poses itself as a possibly happily-ever-after. However, even when she decides to flee with Taylor and embrace love, the reader feels that her journey hasn't had a justified conclusion. Jasmine's quest for her identity continues.

The final story in the trilogy, *Going Ashore* switches from the Second Person to the Third Person Omniscient point of view. After the strong bond established by the first two stories, the sudden change is quite unsettling. However the last vestiges of any link between Hema and Kaushik have faded, and thus there is no reason for either character to hold on to the other. The last part of the story switches to Hema's perspective. Kaushik has come to mean so much to the reader through Hema that to have the news of his death delivered through a Third Person would be belittling his character. Lahiri is shrewd. She makes the reader tell himself about Kaushik's death. Hema only confirms the loss. 'We had been careful, and you had left nothing behind'. And we know he's gone.

And that we could not have had it another way. For the lost generation with hyphenated identities, a manifestation of their larger sense of loss is a channeling of the emotions. As for the readers, we are left with a sad, knowing smile. For as Yeats put it, 'What was it that the poets promised you/ If it were not their sorrow?' ■

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The Indian diaspora understood the meaning of democracy in USA: **Savitri Sawhney**

Gadar or Ghadar Movement, as some call it, is one of the early freedom struggle movements that was originated in the Diaspora. Pandurang Khankhoje was one of the founding fathers of the Movement on whose life, the book "I shall Never Ask for Pardon: A Memoir of Pandurang Khankhoje" was written by his daughter **Savitri Sawhney** published by Penguin India in 2008. In an interview with **Sadananda Sahoo, Ajay Mahurkar and Rakesh Ranjan**, Savitri Sawhney recounts the movement and her creative engagement while penning the book.



⇒ **Ms. Sawhney you have been born and brought up abroad and closely studied the rise of Ghadar movement. How do you perceive your father's role in Ghadar Movement during Freedom Movement?**

The Ghadar movement took place much before I was born. I have only seen my father as an agricultural scientist. In the later part of my life, I came to know about his role in Ghadar Movement. He was one of the founder members of movement. In fact, his life was full with adventure.

⇒ **So, what is Ghadar Movement?**

Well, the movement called Ghadar, in honor of 1857. And because of Veer Sawarkar's book on 1857. It was Hardayal, who suggested the name Ghadar. In fact, my father was not very happy. He told we are fighting for freedom of our country; we should take name like Independence League, or Azadi or something like that, not Ghadar. But later, Ghadar accepted by everyone.

⇒ **How did he mobilize people for this movement?**

My father was already a committed revolutionary at the age of 11 or 12. He was in trouble with the police in Nagpur, when he decided to leave India. In America he used to have meetings with Indian immigrant farmers and labourers inciting them against the British government. Many immigrants, mostly Punjabi Sikhs could not forget the ill treatment and sufferings under the British Yoke. The Indian diaspora understood the meaning of democracy, having experienced it in the USA. My father was very poor in those days and he would meet Indian labourers while working in road gangs and railway worker and later working in lumber mills.

⇒ **Do you think Ghadar Movement was successful?**

There are two ways of looking at Ghadar Movement. Whether it was successful or not is not the point. My father's dream was to come back to India and start a military revolution inspired by the French Revolution or even as the industrial revolution. That was his dream. It could not happen, because British were powerful the world was at war, and their secret service discovered many of their plots. Many were executed when they returned to India and many more were put in jail. But the Ghadar movement was not really a failure, because it inspired many other movements. It gave message to everyone that, those people who were prosperous in America, came back and fought for the country. Bhagat Singh was inspired by Ghadar Movement. His uncle Ajit Singh was part of the Ghadar also. So, we cannot say, it was failure, because it inspired many people and the realization that India was ready for self rule came into being.

⇒ **This year, Ghadar Movement is completing a century and it will be celebrated in many places in the USA and Canada. In what way can the movement inspire and give a message to the current generation?**

I am not so sure, whether, the celebrations will inspire many. In the nineteen thirties, the Ghadar Movement was well known. But, as time has passed, the memory of Ghadar has been forgotten. It was the strongest, at the time of First World War. Why isn't it mentioned in the history books, I don't know. We should not forget that all these movements provided the foundation for the Independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, made people ready for democracy.

⇒ **How do you see Punjabi Diaspora in Ghadar Movement?**

There were people from all parts of the country. But, when we classify the Ghadar Movement, there were 'Student, Leaders and Motivators and 'Punjabi, farmers and Volunteers'; the main body of the movement members were mainly Punjabi Sikhs. But there were people from all over India, this was a truly secular movement their only religion was Patriotism.

⇒ **How was the American response? As during colonial times many of these movements are considered as anti social or against the ruler of that time?**

Americans have had experience of fighting for their independence. So, they did not think it as anti-social. And they were not creating any civil problems. There was an incident, when while learning how to handle explosives, one bomb exploded and Harnam Singh lost one limb, he was later known as Harnam Singh Tundilat. He became one of the foremost leaders in the movement. They passed it off with the authorities as road constructing accident.

⇒ **Tell us something about the book. How did you write this book on Ghadar Movement? How did you collect the documents from different sources to complete this book?**

This was my 'Pitra Dharma' for my father. My father also wanted to write a book on Ghadar Movement. He uses to write all notes in Marathi. There are about three hundred pages he wrote in Marathi. I read extensively many books written on the movement and collated the ideas and incidents with what my father wrote. There are many members of Ghadar movement who wrote about their own experiences about Gadar Movement.

Thank you for sharing your wonderful ideas and experiences. ■



Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement, Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff , Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2009, ISBN-13 978-0-511-71938-7

Migratory birds like the Siberian cranes cover large distances to escape harsh winters and shortage of food during the winter months. Even though they stay for a few months in their host country of migration like India, they are a source of joy as well as a source of income through tourism for locals. In much the same way, humans migrate from their countries of birth for livelihood, better life or to escape conflict or persecution in their homelands. Unlike the birds, however, most of them don't return to their homelands, having settled in their new lives in their adopted homelands. So what is the difference between migrants and Diasporas?

Diasporas are defined as migrants in host countries, who still maintain emotional and material linkages with their homelands. This book by Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff is a scholarly work about digital Diasporas, Diaspora groups that use the Internet. The term 'Digital Diaspora' is a recent coinage and describes the phenomenon of Diasporas using the Internet to connect and maintain bonds with their countries of origin. The Internet pretty much performs the same function as a physical group i.e., that is, it provides a connection to the country of origin, eases security concerns, improves a member's quality of life, creates communities that represent hybrid identities and encourages solidarity among members.

So how does the digital aspect add value? Migration is not easy. The identity of the migrant is not a zero sum game. It is typically a dynamic hybridization between home, host and lived experiences. There is a felt need of a migrant to actively express an identity. This may be derived from various forms of marginalization, confusion or not wanting to lose a sense of homeland identity.

Information technology is interactive and is an easily access tool for Diaspora storytelling, sharing and narration, thus enabling members to make sense of their experiences and feelings in their new culture and identity. The anonymity of the Internet eases the Diaspora participation especially when sharing painful memories or discussing potentially conflictive topics.

Brinkerhoff examines how immigrants who still feel a connection to their country of origin use the Internet, and this, she does through the case study of nine digital organizations. She argues that digital Diasporas can ease security concerns in both the homeland and the host society, thus improving Diaspora members' quality of life in

the host society, and contributing to socioeconomic development in the homeland.

She begins her arguments by theoretically defining the term 'Diaspora' and emphasis on the Diasporan identity and its importance. She elucidates the major components that influence Diaspora identity. These are origin, language, historical memory, religion, and the habitual status of a minority in larger societies.

Diasporas may proactively promote and recreate homeland identities, these identities being more acute in the absence of a physical homeland, for instance, for people from Tibet. She cites the case of Dorjee Nud, a Tibetan born in India, after his parents fled Tibet. Nudup founded TibetBoard in the year 2000, two years after his arrival in New York. TibetBoard, explains Brinkerhoff, is an interactive and comparatively informal destination for those who may want to learn about or negotiate the Tibetan identity among Diaspora.

Brinkerhoff talks about how digital networks increase in social capital, bonding of which provides the collective identity, and how instrumental networks that can ward off personal disorder and psychic crisis. They direct their mobilized identity toward improved quality of life for compatriots in the homeland, for Diaspora communities in the host-land, or for both. For example, the IIT Roorkee Alumni Association of North America (host land) is working with IIT Roorkee (homeland) to help students explore and fine-tune their entrepreneurial instincts by pitching business ideas for start-ups to a panel of senior venture capitalists and entrepreneurs for mentorship and incubation using the digital medium.

Besides a homeland identity, IT helps Diasporas link to the homeland. Brinkerhoff cites the case of Bal Joshi who after pursuing his undergraduate in business studies in Portland, Oregon, returned to Nepal. In Nepal, he started Thamel.com to attract tourists after trying his hand at other entrepreneur ventures. Bal Joshi used Thamel in a throwback to the name of a Kathmandu street that hosts the business core. Thamel.com became an important vehicle for Diasporas to communicate inexpensively with their family members in Nepal. Joshi stumbled on to a new idea related to the Dashain Festival, the most important cultural and spiritual celebration in Nepal, the major component of which was the sacrifice of a ceremonial goat to bring prosperity in the year ahead. After a few iterations, Thamel.com zeroed in on delivering gift certificates from Diasporas that could be redeemed by the family in Nepal at a particular goat market. These become a big hit with the Nepal Diaspora who would transfer the money online for gift certificate to be physically delivered in Nepal.

The chapter, "Digital Diasporas and Conflict Prevention" analyzes how digital Diasporas by the creation of cyber communities counter the marginalization conducive to violence using examples of Somalinet and AfghanistanOnline. These cybercommunities potentially prevent conflict through opportunities to express feelings and bond with others online, as the difficulty of communication in the physical world is simplified in the cyberworld where a certain degree of anonymity is permitted to an individual. Through these cybercommunities, members potentially deflect their frustration and animosity through verbal modes, as opposed to potentially violent forms like physical agitation and confrontation.

The author discusses how Diasporas also support agendas consistent with liberal values, such as democracy and human rights which are advantageous to selected homeland constituents and the international community alike. Furthermore, the author feels Diasporas may not threaten state sovereignty to the extent feared, and may even support it giving the example of the U.S. Copts Association and its physical world political agenda to improve the quality of life of Copts residing in Egypt. She narrates the story of Nermien Riad, a US State Department employee on a duty in Egypt, after visiting a Coptic orphanage in Cairo went on to start the Coptic Orphans that implements four programs in Egypt that not only help the Coptic community, but also extend their reach to non-Coptic girls and their problems.

The author brings out how today the most advanced digital diasporas are seeking to improve policy and institutional frameworks in support of both targeted homeland communities/populations and Diaspora contribution efforts. For example, the Zacatecan Federation of Hometown Associations in the United States orchestrated matching programs with the Mexican Government and spun off a political arm to lobby on both sides of the border, for an improved migrant investment environment while the India, Diaspora members have contribut-

ed significantly to the IT sector, through direct investment brokering investment relationships and proposing and promoting necessary changes to the legal framework in order to improve the investment climate.

Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff is leaning heavily on how these digital Diasporas help negotiate hybrid identity and contribute to homeland societies. How digital Diasporas are contributing to the host-land in terms of host societies understanding of migrant culture, migrant skills and addition to host-land economy is not elucidated. She has also not touched upon digital Diasporas support for secession by ethnic groups in homeland.

The research for this 2009 published book has been done in the early 21st century and hence concepts like "social media Diaspora groups" don't figure in the narrative. How social media channels "Youtube" "Twitter and "Facebook" have reworked connecting and sharing rules on the internet or usage of Skype for communication is not touched upon. Five years is a long time in the new media converged world of today and hence maybe a second edition of the book is due.

Irrespective of a little repetitiveness the book is a must read for students working in the field of Diaspora studies. Students of new media will also get a great baseline insight on digital Diasporas. This combined with the current tidings of digital Diasporas experiments with social media will be worth investigating. ■

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Global Update

Maximising the Development Impact of Migration

The recently released communication by the European Commission on 21 May 2013 at Brussels emphasises on how migration and mobility can contribute to inclusive and economic social development and how to strengthen global cooperation in this area. It states that "The increased regional and global mobility of persons, the structural changes in the global economy, and the current economic crisis generates new opportunities and challenges for countries of origin, transit and destination".

The Commission Communication "Maximising the Devel-

opment Impact of Migration" will provide the basis for a common position of the EU and its Member States at the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, organised by the United Nations General Assembly on 3-4 October 2013. The policy makers and practitioners from different member countries will have unique opportunities to reflect on how to work towards a global agenda for effective, inclusive and rights-based migration governance and identify measures to promote the role of migrants as agents of innovation and development.

"Migration and mobility are key drivers of sustainable

development, but global cooperation must shift into a higher gear. The UN High-level Dialogue in October will provide a unique opportunity to bring forward the global agenda on migration and development, and promote concrete measures which make a meaningful contribution to the lives of migrants," said Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström"

Andris Piebalgs, Commissioner for Development, underlined that "migration should be recognised as a driver of inclusive economic, social and environmental development and, as such, included as a priority in the post-2015 development agenda".

To promote migration and mobility as a driver for development of both low and middle-income countries of origin and destination, the Commission calls on all relevant actors to capitalise on opportunities and to tackle the challenges associated with international migration, inter alia:

- Ensure that development strategies recognise migration and mobility as 'enabling factors' for development.
- Respect the dignity and uphold the fundamental and human rights of migrants, regardless of the migrants' legal status.
- Give more consideration to the interlinkages between climate change, environmental degradation and migration
- Recognise the challenges that increasing urbanisation and migration bring for cities and urban regions;
- Strengthen migration governance through bilateral and regional cooperation, including by engaging with civil society.
- Foster international and regional labour mobility.

The Communication also proposes how the EU could adopt a more ambitious approach to migration and development in its own policies and practices, in particular through the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility and the EU development policy, the Agenda for Change. In order to address more comprehensively the role migration and mobility play in sustainable development, a number of new priorities are identified, including promoting the governance and development impacts of migration between developing countries, and integrating migration into the development agenda. The Commission also commits to step up support for migration and development initiatives, including by assisting EU partner countries to promote migration governance.

The total number of international migrants rose from 150 million in 2000 to 214 million in 2010¹. Over half of these migrants reside in low- and middle income countries, and

many developing countries are simultaneously countries of origin and destination of migrants. This increasing regional and global mobility creates opportunities; contributing for instance to poverty reduction and innovation. But it also requires effective governance in order to address challenges such as 'brain drain' (outward migration of educated people), migrant exploitation and the effects of migration on urbanisation.

With its Global Approach to Migration and Mobility the EU has developed a balanced and comprehensive external migration policy which includes migration and development as one of its four operational priority areas. Migration is also a specific priority in the EU Agenda for Change, the Commission's development policy blueprint to refocus its work to focus on those countries and sectors which most need support.

The EU is the world's leading donor of development assistance and will continue to provide substantial support in the years to come. Migration is a priority topic under the EU's development cooperation. Between 2004 and 2012, the Commission has committed almost €1 billion to more than 400 migration-related projects.

The UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development will take place on 3-4 October 2013 - Commissioner Malmström will be representing the EU.

The High-level Dialogue aims to identify concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation at all levels, with a view to enhancing the benefits of international migration for migrants and countries alike and its links to development. It takes place in the context of preparations of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

Discussions at the High-level Dialogue will focus on:

- Assessing the effects of international migration on sustainable development and identifying relevant priorities in view of the preparation of the post-2015 development framework;
- Measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants, with particular reference to women and children as well as to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and to ensure orderly, regular and safe migration;
- Strengthening partnerships and cooperation on international migration, mechanisms to effectively integrate migration into development policies and promoting coherence at all levels; and
- International and regional labour mobility and its impact on development. ■

Information Sharing and Policy to facilitate Global Knowledge Demand: says Manoj Kumar of Diaspora Services

An International Workshop on the Student Mobility and Knowledge-based Economies was organised on 14th June 2013 at JNU Convention Centre by India Centre for Migration (ICM), a think tank of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in association with International Migration and Diaspora Studies Project (IMDS), Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and European Union Delegation to India, New Delhi. The day long workshop brought together experts from diverse backgrounds such as academics, policy, grassroots activism etc. in EU countries and India to address the issues of student mobility and the challenges faced by both India and European Unions (EU). The workshop shared the findings of the research project titled "Developing Knowledgebase for Policy making on India EU Migration".

The inaugural address was given by Mr. T.K. Manoj Kumar, Joint Secretary, Diaspora Services, MOIA and Chief

Executive Officer, ICM. Student mobility, according to him, student mobility can be contextualised in the colonial past of India with the European countries especially Britain, France and Dutch. He said that the "relation between India and EU is one of the oldest among International relations. India being the colonial country has exchange of ideas, goods, people (labour/students). In the post colonial phase also the relationship continued". Mr. Kumar mentioned that the post 1990s is a phase where migration of scholars was phenomenal as a result of emergence of knowledge economy. This phase marked by sectoral policy dialogue and the mobility of student faculty through exchange programmes. In this context Mr. Kumar emphasised the need for better coordination for information sharing among stakeholders in both sides for better policy formulation. Mr. Kumar mentioned that academic mobility is a part of global knowledge demand. Indian students constitute about 5 % of the student population in EU. ■

Call for Papers- African Diasporas: Old and New

April 3-6, 2014

submit all abstracts to Cacee Hoyer/Danielle Sanchez: africaconference2014@gmail.com

The goal of this conference is to create an interdisciplinary dialogue concerning Africa and Africans throughout the world from both historical and contemporary approaches. This conference seeks to bring together a vast array of scholars on a variety of academic levels to discuss the complex experiences of African descended peoples across the globe.

What is the African Diaspora? How are old and new diasporas discussed in a variety of disciplines? How can we conceptualize the African Diaspora? What is the role of the African Diaspora in modern politics? How do various groups within old and new African diasporas conceptualize themselves in relation to others? How do diasporic voices shape conceptualizations of individual and collective identities? What will the African diaspora look like in the future?

This conference also has a commitment to professional development which will be fostered through workshops in writing, publishing, and conference presentation. The conference will also provide ample time for professionals from various disciplines and geographical locations to interact, exchange ideas, and receive feedback. Graduate students

are especially encouraged to attend and present papers and will be partnered with a senior scholar to encourage their own growth as scholars.

The deadline for submitting paper proposals is November 31, 2013. Proposals should include a 250-word abstract and title, as well as the author's name, address, telephone number, email address, and institutional affiliation. A mandatory non-refundable registration fee of \$150 for scholars and \$100 for graduate students must be paid immediately upon the acceptance of the abstract. This conference fee includes admission to the panels, workshops, and special events, as well as transportation to and from the conference from the hotel, breakfast for three days, dinner on Friday night, lunch on Saturday, and a banquet on Saturday evening.

The University of Texas at Austin does not provide participants with any form of funding support, travel expenses, or boarding expenses. If the conference obtains outside funding this will be used to help subsidize graduate students' accommodations on a competitive basis but it is not guaranteed. ■

Convened by Dr. Toyin Falola

Coordinated by Cacee Hoyer and Danielle Sanchez

We invite Students, Researchers and Faculty Members to submit a small write up of their achievements and awards 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@grfddt.com