

## **International Conference**

**Title: Empire, Nation and Diaspora: Mapping the Trajectories of Transformations in Indian Diaspora**

**Schedule: 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012**

**Place: Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora**

**University of Hyderabad (a Central University)**

**Hyderabad (India)**

Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora, University of Hyderabad is organising an international conference on Indian diaspora. Rationale of this conference is to read the Indian diaspora as a dynamic construct (s) which has undergone/undergoing through several processes of transformations rather than essentialised static communities. Deliberations during the conference will try to map the trajectories of these transformations in certain interlinked essential domains of diasporic lives – cultural, social, economic and political. This conference intends to approach the transformations from a historical vantage point in the locations of old Indian Diaspora – Mauritius, Fiji, South Africa, Trinidad, Guiana, Suriname, East Africa, and Southeast Asia (and many more) and will ascertain how (and to what extent) the process of decolonisation/ independence has determined such transformations in these locations. The two critical reference points for tracing the transformations would be – first, independence/decolonisation in 1960s and 1970s and second, globalisation in last two decades.

Old Indian Diaspora implies to the Diasporic Indian communities which were creation of the trans-colonial movement of Indians under the British colonial domination in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, primarily to work as contract labourers (popularly known as Girmityas) but also included traders, merchants and auxiliary workers for services.

This conference would attempt to look into the trajectories of transformations from a comparative perspective in order to problematise the very linear, monolithic portrayal of the Indian diaspora across all the locations. It will attempt to quest for the factors which have attributed for the multiplicity of trajectories of transformations and how the course of transformations and contemporary positioning is different for different locations, e.g. in Mauritius, Malaysia and Fiji. It would quest into the legacy of colonialism in determining the course of transformations.

Deliberations during the conference would focus around the following broad themes in order to map the trajectories of transformations in the Indian diasporic communities with an emphasis on generational shifts:

1. Social and Cultural Transformations – How the structures and institutions of social order like caste system and hierarchies have been transformed or retained from those of the homeland, or the new orders are being created. How do the diasporic communities have responded to the dialectic of persistence and change and adaptation.
2. Economic Mobility – To what extent the labour diaspora has moved in the economic pyramid and by what means – education, diversification in vocations etc and whether the economic mobility is sustainable in long historical course with contemporary challenges of global integration of economies. Is the economic mobility showing the signs of regressive move for the large sections of the diaspora and thus creating a divide within the Indian diasporic communities.
3. Political Positioning – What is the political positioning and levels of participation of the Indian diaspora in their respective locations. Is their political participation and position sufficient to make them part of the lands of settlement or they continue to live as an outsider and are being subjected to alienation and discrimination.
4. Twice (or Multiple) displacement and its course of transformation – Generally since 1960s onwards (and it is an ongoing process) people from the older diaspora have made a second (or multiple) departure from the initial location of their diasporic displacement. In some cases it has been ruthlessly forced (East African countries), in some cases surreptitiously lead and in several cases voluntarily opted for greener pastures. It would be very valuable to investigate how the Indian diasporic communities respond to the experiences of twice (or multiple) displacement and negotiate their lives social-cultural and economic-political domains.
5. Changing Meanings and relations with homeland - How the relationship between the home (India) and the diasporic Indians has been rearticulated with the changing meanings of home for the generations and the shifting position of India from a colony to an emergent global economy. Is there an endurance/ or a rupture between the imagery of home (as an

ideal land) for the earlier generations and the contemporary generation's real encounters with the India.

6. Gendered Perspectives – Gendered aspects of the Indian labour diaspora has been mostly examined from two polarised positions – either as site of liberation or as site of further subjugation. Can there be a departure from such extreme academic positions by looking into transformations and dynamic role of diasporic women in these locations?
7. Reflective Representation of Transformations in Text and Visual Medium – how these transformations have been represented in the literary and visual mediums like fiction, poetry and films and how these mediums themselves have undergone transformation with changing concerns, sensibilities and responses..

While discussing these themes, the underlying emphasis would be on reading the diasporic agency.

Conference aims to attract a mix of senior and younger scholars working on these themes. Selected papers will be published in an edited volume from publisher of international repute.

Last date for sending the abstract (about 200 words) and a short biographical note is 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011. Full papers are due by 10<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Please send your abstracts and bio sketch by email to [indiansindiaspora@gmail.com](mailto:indiansindiaspora@gmail.com) and [amitchs@yahoo.com](mailto:amitchs@yahoo.com)

Local hospitality (lodging and boarding, local travel) will be provided to all the participants. Conference organisers regret that there is no support available for international travel. Limited funding for travel is available for participants within the country.

Please feel free to contact the conference convenor on the following address:

Dr Amit Kumar MISHRA  
Assistant Professor  
Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora  
School of Social Sciences  
University of Hyderabad  
Hyderabad (India)  
Email: [amitchs@yahoo.com](mailto:amitchs@yahoo.com)  
Phone: +91-40-23133043 (Office)  
Mobile: +91-9951156700