



## ***Editor's Note***

This issue of ODI Newsletter combines two issues April-June 2010 and July-September 2010, presents a wide range of coverage including institutional news, international news, conference and calls for paper, books etc.

Indian diaspora achieves a historical milestone by commemorating 150 years in South Africa. Representatives of ODI were felicitated on the occasion. ODI also launched its new interactive website to facilitate more research and networks across the globe.

The Newsletter presents an interesting variety of institutional, national and international events and activities that will be useful for diaspora scholars.

## **ODI Newsletter**

**April-June 2010  
&  
July-September 2010  
Vol.2, No 2 & 3**

- **Institutional News**
- **International Diasporas**
- **Indian Diaspora**

Organization for Diaspora Initiatives (ODI) is working to understand the status and role of Diasporic communities across the globe— both in domestic and international context. It maps the emerging roles, networks and operations of different Diasporic communities as a resource in the international civil society space as well as in the host and the home countries. ODI specifically focus on Indian Diaspora as the main thrust of research.

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## Institutional News

### Diaspora Studies launched its New Website

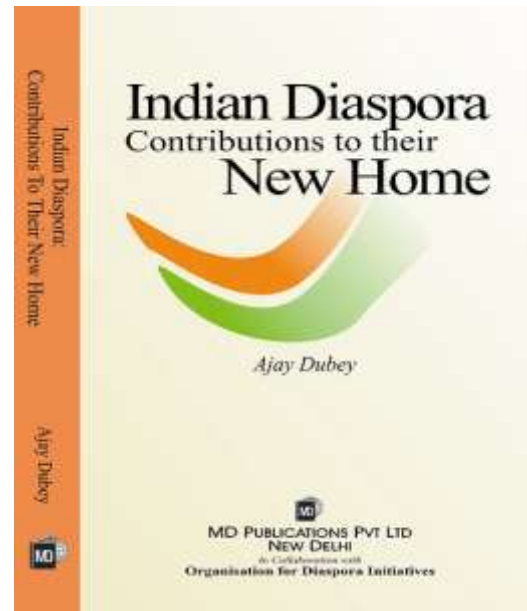
**Diaspora Studies**, the interdisciplinary biannual refereed journal has launched its own website to facilitate the peer interaction engaged in diaspora research. This journal is published by Organisation for Diaspora Initiatives based in New Delhi, India. Prospective authors and diaspora scholars can upload articles and view the previous issues and important information related to journal at: [www.diasporastudies.in](http://www.diasporastudies.in)

### Current Issues of Diaspora Studies

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### New Book on Diaspora by ODI

### Indian Diaspora: Contributions to their New Home



The book is a very much awaited addition to the diaspora scholarship. The book highlighted how the People of Indian Origin migrated from India during colonial rules. They were taken largely as replacement of slave workers under the indentured system of contract labour. Though they were semi skilled workers suitable for agricultural works, they were treated very badly by the local colonial powers and kept at the lowest strata in socio-economic structures of their new home. Though some free passengers from India who came as traders, merchants or petty businessman or construction workers also joined them. But the number of later categories was very small and their presence did not change the social status or treatment of Indian indentured workers.

The book talks about the contribution of Indian diaspora to their land of adoption in

the economic, political and cultural domain. Their growth stories were also the stories of their contribution and peaceful integration. Today when they have emerged as an affluent diasporas which occupies a significant position across the globe in their respective countries- their contributions to the societies and countries which they nurtured and made their home are not understood or appreciated. Their image of the past as one who was brought in by colonial exploiters, who barely managed to survive makes it appear as if they had little to contribute. The story of their exploitation their trial and tribulation and their relentless struggle to move on in life are documented. What has not been documented and brought to public domain is their enormous contributions to their countries despite being kept in a most adverse and disabling circumstances. This book has brought out the contributions of people of Indian origin to their countries of adoptions in economic, political, social and cultural aspects of their new home.

### **Peggy Levitt on 'Thinking Transnationally about Migration'**

Peggy Levitt delivered a talk on 'Thinking Transnationally about Migration' on August 18, 2010 at the India International Centre, New Delhi. The Session was chaired by Ambassador Paramjit Sahai. Daniel Naujoks, a research scholar at the University of Münster, Germany introduced the topic. While introducing the theme, Ambassador Sahai explained the path of moving away from investment and other issues to transnationalism. Daniel Naujoks pointed out that the transnational migration study helps us to look at Diaspora in a broader prism. He gave a detailed anecdote on the speaker's published work. Among numerous articles and books of Peggy Levitt, *The*

*Transnational Villagers* offers a detailed account of how ordinary people keep their feet on two worlds and create communities that span borders.

Peggy Levitt started her presentation by underlying the importance of theoretical dimension to migration studies. She traced on the nature of functioning of community development organizations towards creating infrastructure and setting up Community Park and Boutiques. Many forces including capitalism, social movements, imperialism and religion have always crossed borders. The contemporary Nation-State system is relatively new. Migration deals with the people who stay behind as it is about people who move. People divided in terms of their geographical pace but they occupied equally in terms of their social base and emotional base. Migration has a horizontal connection as in the case of Gujarati Swami Narayan spreading all over the world. So, there is a need of thinking beyond the outside the Nation-State system. Movement is circular, not just one way. When people move from one place to another place, they carry with them the social and cultural values. Interestingly, she also looks at the gender dimensions of migration, where she argued that the stereo-type image of women has completely changed because of migration. It enhances their autonomy and promotes for higher education. Migration strengthens women network. The speaker concluded that migration has not always positive impact but it has some negative consequences which weakens the institutions. Therefore, it is essential to look at transnational problems in terms of transnational solution and the initiative should be made in that way.

Professor Ajay Dubey of Jawaharlal Nehru University delivered the concluding remarks. Drawing the link between Diaspora studies and transnational studies, he argued

that globalization is a driving force which has given a new direction to Diaspora studies. He ended up with a vote of thanks.

Report by Sasmita Mohanty, PhD/CAS  
JNU

### **A New course on Indian Diaspora and Transnationalism by IGNOU**

School of Interdisciplinary and Trans-disciplinary Studies, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi already had an expert committee meeting to develop the course content for offering a unique course on Indian Diaspora and Transnationalism on Open and Distance Mode (ODL) to the International students.

The course is first of its kind and hope to cater to the needs of large array of stakeholders. Apart from catering to the demand of academic, it also plans to cater to the needs of Government, Development and Industry Sectors.

### **ACCORD commemorates 150 years of the Indian Diaspora**

The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) felicitated Professors Ajay Dubey and Aparajita Biswas from India on Wednesday 15 July 2010, as part of ACCORD's commemoration of 150 years of Indian settlers in KwaZulu Natal. The academics are in South Africa is to look into the contribution of the Indian Diaspora to the development of South Africa over the last 150 years.



*(L-R) Ela Gandhi, Prof Biswas, Prof Dubey and Indian Consulate General, Anil Sharan.*

Professor Ajay Dubey presented on “The Role of the Indian Diaspora in East Africa and Mauritius” to members of the 1860 Indian Settlers’ Group including such guests as Dr Dilly Naidoo and Mr Swami Gounden. Professor Dubey’s research was then put up for debate in an open floor discussion chaired by Ela Gandhi. The group was most concerned about the economic investment to India by the South African Indian Diaspora and the apparent growing apathy of South African Indians to integration initiatives in the community. Also of high concern was questions posed about the youth of South Africa and how to increase youth involvement in humanitarian campaigns.

The Indian Consulate General, Mr Anil Sharan, congratulated Professor Dubey on an excellent presentation and floor discussion.

Prof Dubey has done extensive work on the Indian Diaspora in East Africa and Mauritius. He is the President of the Organisation for Diaspora Initiatives and Director of Francophone African Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University. The Indian Professors were taken on a tour of ACCORD’s refurbished offices and were most impressed by the facilities and the work of our institution

## **GOPIO Establishes the Global Indian Diaspora Heritage Society (GIDHS)**

GOPIO is taking the lead role in the effort to establish a memorial and museum at the site of the Kolkotta's Bhowanipore Depôt land used to house indentured laborers awaiting the ships for emigration to plantations in colonies of West Indies, Mauritius, Fiji, Africa and elsewhere. The intent is to erect a memorial and museum at that very site in honor of the hundreds of thousands of Indian emigrants who officially left India from 1834 through 1920 from the port of Calcutta. GOPIO Executive Vice President Ashook Ramsaran travelled to Kolkotta (Jan 11-12, 2010) with well known historian and writer Leela Sarup, accompanied by India's High Commissioner to Trinidad & Tobago Hon Malay Mishra. Leela Sarup is an ardent advocate of the preservation of the site and GOPIO is a strong proponent in this effort. GOPIO is leading the effort to acquire the land and construct a "Kolkotta Memorial & Museum" with historical connections to all those who left those shores and whose descendents can share in that history.

## **International**

### **Durban to host Africa diaspora conference**

Come October and the Indian diaspora in Africa will converge for the Mini Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) in Durban, marking the city's historic links with India and aiming to 'build bridges' between them and their country of origin.

The event, titled 'PBD-Africa', is to be held in the South African city Oct 1-2 on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The year also marks the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured

sugarcane labourers from India whose descendants have today risen to become flourishing entrepreneurs.

Durban was 'appropriately' chosen not just for its largest population of Indian diaspora in South Africa but for the history India shares with the city, said A. Didar Singh, secretary, overseas Indian affairs ministry.

'South Africa, and more so Durban, was chosen for the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi (Oct 2) as there is a strong connection between the two countries through Gandhiji,' Singh told IANS in an interview.

'He started his Satyagraha (championing of truth) movement in Durban. It all felt appropriate; so that will be the right time,' Singh said.

It was in South Africa that Gandhi's transformation from Mohandas to Mahatma took place.

History has it that in 1893 when Gandhi landed in Durban, he learnt of the oppressive atmosphere of racial discrimination against Indians settled in South Africa. His struggle began with the Satyagraha movement there.

Gandhi's struggle in South Africa saw success in 1914, before he returned to India, in an agreement between him and the South African government in which the main Indian demands against racial and class discriminations were conceded.

'Gandhiji's birthday is of great significance to our event with the great history behind it...This occasion will help the different sections of overseas Indians to find areas of common interest, including their culture and roots,'

Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi told IANS.

The African continent is home to three million people of Indian origin, of which 1.5 million live in South Africa alone.

Informing that the mini PBDs are held region-wise and not country-wise, Singh said the mini PBD-Africa will be attended by delegates from across the 54-nation continent.

He said experts and speakers from both India and Africa will also be there for all the sessions. 'We are targeting about 500 delegates from Africa and about 15-20 delegates from India,' Singh said.

It will commence Oct 1 in Durban's historical City Hall, with a formal inauguration jointly by Premier Zweli Mkhize of KwaZulu-Natal province and Indian minister Ravi.

The hall chosen for the event was built in Renaissance style in 1910, and 2010 marks its 100th year, making it the perfect venue for PBD-Africa.

The inauguration will follow a cultural evening sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), with performances by Indian artists, projecting Indian art and culture.

The main sessions of the conference will begin the second day with Gandhi's invocation prayers and hymns in Durban's International Convention Centre (ICC), a prestigious venue.

The first session of the conference will be on Gandhi, followed by sessions on business and trade, issues of diaspora youth, issue of gender - of diaspora women in multicultural society - and

the role of the diaspora in the context of economic compulsions of globalisation.

'The concept is that the diaspora is the resource that can build bridges between African countries and India, between the diaspora and India, and between the diaspora and the countries where they reside,' Singh said.

'It discusses the issues of common interest and by doing this, the ministry will fulfil its mandate of engaging with the diaspora,' he added.

The first mini PBD was held in September 2007 in New York for the US, the second in Singapore in October 2008 for Asia and the third in the Netherlands in September 2009 for Europe.

### **Genetic study sheds light on Jewish diaspora Scientists have shed light on Jewish history with an in-depth genetic study.**

The researchers analysed genetic samples from 14 Jewish communities across the world and compared them with those from 69 non-Jewish populations.

Their study, published in Nature, revealed that most Jewish populations were "genetically closer" to each other than to their non-Jewish neighbours.

It also revealed genetic ties between globally dispersed Jews and non-Jewish populations in the Middle East.

This fits with the idea that most contemporary Jews descended from ancient Hebrew and Israelite residents in the Middle Eastern region known as the Levant. It provides a trace of the Jewish diaspora.

Doron Behar from Rambam Health Care Campus in Haifa, Israel, led an international team of scientists in the study. He described it as a form of "genetic archaeology".

"It seems that most Jewish populations and therefore most Jewish individuals are closer to each other [at the genetic level], and closer to the Middle Eastern populations, than to their traditional host population in the diaspora," he explained.

There were exceptions to this key finding, though, as Dr Behar explained.

He said that his research revealed that Ethiopian and Indian Jewish communities were genetically closer to their neighbouring non-Jewish populations.

This may be partly because a greater degree of genetic, religious and cultural crossover took place when the Jewish communities in these areas became established.

Novel analytical techniques allowed the scientists to examine the genetic samples they took in unprecedented detail.

Dr Behar says the data from this study could aid future research into the genetic basis of diseases that are more prevalent in the Jewish population.

### **British Filipinos join Diaspora debate on UK politics**

British voters from different ethnic backgrounds gathered for a political debate in London as part of the lead up to the general elections in the United Kingdom.

Organized by non-profit British Filipino organization Philippine Generations, in

association with international charity organization VSO, the event raised issues that matter most to diaspora communities in the capital city.

"It's about bringing the debate into the community, so that they have a chance to ask questions that really matter to them," said Sam Soto-Jennings, Event Manager from Philippine Generations.

She added: "We've been speaking with a lot of people within our community and our group, and we find that a lot of people are quite disengaged or maybe disinterested with politics, especially UK politics, and perhaps this is a way to actually engage those people into politics."

### **Diaspora Nigerians seek inclusion in 2011 polls**

Nigerians in the Diaspora have urged the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Attahiru Jega, to work out arrangement that would enable them exercise their franchise at the elections.

Chairman of Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation in Europe (NIDO) and founder of Ben TV, London, Mr. Alistair Shoyode, made the call while speaking with Vanguard shortly after paying a solidarity visit to the executive members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Lagos Council, on the recent kidnap saga.

According to Shoyode, it was time for Nigerians to take their destiny in their hands like other advanced countries were presently doing.

The Federal Government recognise July 25 as the Diaspora day and within that period, he said they come back home to address the problem affecting Nigerians in Diaspora.

Shoyode said what was actually agitating the minds of Nigerians in Diaspora was the issue of

how they could participate and vote in the 2011 general election.

## **Indian Diaspora**

### **Goa University to have chair for diaspora studies**

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has agreed to create a chair for diaspora studies at the Goa university, Goa Non-Resident Indian (NRI) commissioner Eduardo Faleiro said Tuesday.

He said at a press conference here that the university had been asked to draft a proposal for creating a diaspora studies chair and send it to the UGC to expedite the process.

Faleiro, a former minister of state for external affairs, said, 'The study of population migration in all its diverse aspects is one of the most fascinating areas of research at present. A large number of universities abroad have this facility,'

'However, the Goan Diaspora in particular and the Indian diaspora in general constitutes significant communities worldwide. None of our academic institutions have facilities for focussed research and teaching on this subject,' he added.

Faleiro said his discussions with Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal on the subject had borne fruit.

Faleiro also said that 'The minister has agreed to my request and the UGC has asked the registrar of the Goa university to send a proposal for a chair on diaspora studies at our university,' and the chair on diaspora studies will deal with the questions and issues regarding the Indian diaspora in academic depth and in a comparative

context along with the study of migration in other countries.

The Goa University would be the first varsity in the country to offer such a chair.

Incidentally, Goa is the second state in India after Kerala to conduct a survey on emigration of its working population from Goa, to other countries for employment, primarily in the Gulf region.

Source : <http://sify.com/news/goa-university-to-have-chair-for-diaspora-studies-news-education-kikp4fgdbjd.html>

### **Government sets up Community Welfare Fund for Diaspora**

2 Aug 2010, 0140 hrs

NEW DELHI: In a novel initiative, the Government has started to set up a community welfare fund in 42 Indian missions abroad to facilitate extending help to diaspora community in times of difficulty.

The Indian Community Welfare Fund has been set up to offer various assistance, including legal and financial help to distressed Indians, a top official of the Overseas Indian Affairs Ministry said.

The fund has been made available in all the Gulf countries where a substantial number of Indians are living. An estimated five million workers are currently staying in the Gulf region.

"So far the fund has been set up in 42 countries. It has also been made available in several European countries where Indian population is of significant number," the official said.

The fund will particularly be used to help women migrants who become victims of unscrupulous intermediaries in foreign soil.

The official said the fund will equip the missions better in ensuring protection and welfare of overseas Indian workers.

The Ministry has also set up Indian Workers Resource Centres in many countries in the Gulf region to offer information relating to job opportunities and educate people about law of the particular countries.

India has signed Labour Mobility Partnership Agreement with several Gulf nations that provides for exchange of information relating to diverse fields of employment.

### **Indian diaspora can share knowledge with India under new mechanism**

NEW DELHI: Living in foreign soil, eminent Indians who have excelled in diverse fields can now contribute for the overall development of India.

The government has put in place a mechanism under which the Indian diaspora will be able to share their experience and knowledge in diverse areas including technology, education and health sector.

In its report to the people on the occasion of completion of first year of UPA II, the government said it has set up of an online platform 'Global Indian Network of Knowledge' for sharing knowledge and experiences of the diaspora.

The government said a 'Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians' has been set up to draw upon experiences and knowledge of eminent people of Indian origin from across the globe.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, steel magnate Lakshmi Narayan Mittal and Pepsico CEO Indra

Nooyi are among the 20 global business leaders and economists of Indian origin who are members of the council. The first meeting of the Council was held on January 7, 2010 here.

"Global Indian Network of Knowledge is an electronic platform that will connect people of Indian origin from a variety of disciplines, recognised as leaders in their respective fields, not just in their country of residence but globally as well..The network will serve as a strategic 'virtual think tank'," the report said.

The Global INK is operational since January one this year.

The report also mentioned about the eighth edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas which was held here from January 7 to 9.

"The Convention was attended by over 1,500 delegates from different countries. On this occasion, Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards were conferred on 14 overseas Indians," the report said.

Government said it signed social security pacts with Switzerland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Hungary and Denmark to ensure welfare of Indians working in these countries.

The report said government also approved the proposal for setting up the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in the Indian Missions in 17 countries where emigration check is required, and the Maldives.

"The ICWF will enable extending on site welfare and emergency relief to overseas Indians in distress," it said.

## **Sikh Diaspora honours its own**

The Sikh Centennial Foundation recently hosted its annual gala at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, attracting more than 500 guests with the sights and sounds of Sikh culture at its finest. Over the 12-year history of the gala, the foundation has hosted prime ministers, leaders of industry, distinguished entrepreneurs and accomplished artists.

The Sikh Centennial Foundation gala honours exemplary Sikhs and non-Sikhs. This year's honourees included community volunteer Jhalman Singh Gosal; Neena Kanwar, president and CEO of KMH Cardiology & Diagnostic Centers; Kulveer Taggar, director of Live Current Media Inc.; and Dr. Samantha Nutt, founder and executive director of War Child Canada.

Past honourees have included Chief Justice Roy McMurtry of Ontario; Wally Oppal, attorney general of British Columbia; humanitarians Stephen Lewis and June Callwood; Sarabjit Marwah, vice-chairman and chief operating officer, Bank of Nova Scotia; and Canadian figure skater Emanuel Sandhu.

"The gala is the highlight of the year for the Sikh diaspora in Canada," said gala chair Dr. Davindra Singh. "It gives us the chance to showcase our history, culture and traditions to the Canadian community at large. It also allows us to honour individuals that are inspiring, well-accomplished and act as ambassadors of Sikh values."

Among the VIPs in attendance this year were Fareed Amin, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure (Ontario); MP Singh, Indian Consulate; Michael Metcalfe, chief of Peel Police; Emil Kolb, chair,

Peel Police Services Board; Inspector Chris McCord, Peel Police; Kevin Johnson, U.S. Consul General; Dr. Erik Hoskins, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (Ontario); Dr. Judith Wolfson, vice-president of university relations, University of Toronto; and Dr. Allan Shepherd, provost and vice-president, Ryerson University.

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