



# ODI

## Editor's message

This is the second Newsletter brought out by ODI. Besides the institutional news, the Newsletter highlights a range of issues at national and international levels concerning diaspora studies. It also contains book news section.

ODI has initiated a quarterly round table series with participation of eminent scholars on diaspora studies.

The scholars invited include policy experts, academicians and research scholars. The first round table was a overwhelming success.

The Diaspora Studies Journal next issue is almost ready to be out.

We hope the Newsletter will cater to the need of all stakeholders. We also invite all your valuable input to make the newsletter more meaningful to all our readers.

## ODI Newsletter April-June 2009 Vol.1, No.2

- Institutional News Events
- Indian Diaspora
- International Diaspora
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### 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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## Emerging Challenges of Diaspora Policies

Organization for Diaspora Initiatives (ODI) had organised a round table discussion on —Emerging Challenges of Diaspora Policies|| at School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University on May 9, 2009 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The round table discussion was initiated by J. C. Sharma, former secretary Ministry Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Government of India. J.C. Sharma was one of the key members involved in the High Level Committee Report on Indian Diaspora during NDA Government and has wide expertise on the diaspora issues. There were around 25 scholars and experts on diaspora participated in the discussion. Prof. Partho Ghosh of School of International Studies (SIS) chaired the session. Prof. Ajay Dubey, President of ODI gave a brief introduction about the activities of ODI and also introduced Shri J.C. Sharma to the audience. ODI recently has introduced three important initiatives that will help in promoting research in diaspora as well as provide important policy inputs. They are (i) A Global online network of diaspora scholars (e-group), (ii) an electronic newsletter that will document all the diaspora related news and disseminate among the scholars, and (iii) a series of round table discussions at regular intervals.



J.C. Sharma initiated the discussion by appreciating the initiatives taken by ODI and especially lauded the effort of Prof. Dubey for providing a platform for promoting diaspora research. He has also mentioned that government should establish centers at the

university level to study and conduct research on diaspora. Sharma gave a historical account of how the diaspora policies emerged in India. He lauded the initiative of NDA Government in promoting clear cut diaspora policies. His lecturer broadly addressed the diaspora policies of Government of India in relation to the following issues: # Security: Diaspora policy is framed under the larger issue of security perspectives. He had touched upon various issues like terrorism and diaspora (LTTE and Sikh), regional parties and diaspora (TDP and Akalis) and broader ethnic problems like Kashmir etc. Thus making diaspora policy is a very sensitive issue regarding the security of the country.

# Emerging Knowledge Economy: Sharma mentioned that the emerging knowledge economy creates enormous opportunities by engaging its diaspora in its development process. The academic and scientific talent of the Indian diaspora is well known. He mentioned that this can be effectively done through alumni network. He gave the example of the Indian School of Business at Hyderabad which according to him should be replicated elsewhere.

# New generation of diaspora: Sharma emphasized the continuing of the links with the next generation of diaspora i.e. the young diaspora. This is important for long term relationship with the diaspora. The youths can be engaged through cultural and academic programmes. Study India Programme (SIP) is one such which can be promoted in all educational institutions. He gave the example of educational programmes for Israel youths where Israel Government in partnership with Jews diaspora promotes the programme.

# Investment: Sharma mentioned that till date India's approach towards its diaspora is primarily remittance centric. There is a need for investment centric approach with the Indian diaspora.

# Welfare of the Diaspora: Citing the example of the Indian diaspora in Gulf who constitute marginalized labour and therefore vulnerable to economic crisis. There is a need for more welfare centric approach. During the recession time many are returning to India and there is a need for providing proper employment and

other facilities to them. He suggested for a —Pravasi Bima Yojana|| to be extended for more number of people. The approach will help integrating the diaspora to India.

# Philanthropy: Diaspora does not promote hassle free philanthropy. We don't have well thought out policies to engage diaspora philanthropically.

# Old and New Diaspora: He also mentioned the diversity of diaspora and need for policies to address their issues. The diasporas are divided in terms of region as well as generations.

In the question answer session, several critical issues cropped up. Prof. H.C. Narang, criticized the biased approach of J.C. Sharma as he was supporting the policies regarding diaspora by NDA government. He pointed out that Vajpayee's pravasi shining was rejected by the people of India.

Prof. Arora criticized the views of Mr. J.C. Sharma saying it was Hindu chauvanistic approach. Giving the example of Jewish and Irish diaspora, Prof. Arora said that the psychologies of diaspora are radical even though they derive sustenance from melting pot. Prof. Manmohini Kaul appreciated the talk by saying that it was educating and pointed out that there is no cohesiveness among the diasporic community and hence sensitivity, identity and aspiration of different communities within the diaspora has to be taken up. Recognizing the difference of opinion among the audiences Dr. Vivek Kumar from JNU pointed out that there is no monolithic diaspora. There are multiplicities of diaspora. Giving an example of emerging Dalit diaspora, he mentioned that the policy does not give any attention to Dalits. Prof. P.C. Jain, from JNU emphasized on (1) historical connectivity while talking about the diaspora policy, (2) consideration of theoretical area i.e political-economic framework. Giving example of 1990s where he mentioned that certain political-economic framework favoured diaspora policies, and (3) emphasis on ethnic diversity within the broad umbrella of diversity. He pointed out the new ethnic-religious communities (such as Jains) within the diaspora are asserting themselves by carving out of broad religious fold (Hinduism). Dr. Vivek Kumar from JNU pointed out that the Dalits are not getting their due attention from the

diaspora policy of Government of India.. Citing the example of how illiterate Dhobis in Unao have been exploited in the process of remitting money to home. He mentioned that the poor labourers in Gulf and elsewhere must be given due support by the government.

J.C. Sharma mentioned that over the years there has been growing awareness about certain problems which he called as systemic problem within the India itself. There is a growing awareness about the problems of NRI marriages and government has provided nodal officers to deal with the issue. Prof. H.C. Narang mentioned that the Indian diaspora needs to change its attitude in the country of their domicile. He raised the issue of racial discrimination where he mentioned that Indians treat Africans in the same way like the British or the colonial rulers treated them in the past. However, everybody agreed that the diaspora policy should not contradict the broader national policies rather it should complement those. In the end Bijay Pratihari, Treasurer of ODI placed a vote of thanks.

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## Studying African Diasporas

A talk was organised by India International Centre and African Studies Association of India (ASA) on Studying African Diasporas: Are there differences between Atlantic model and Indian Ocean Models?|| by Professor Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, President African Studies Association of USA. The talk was chaired by Professor Ajay Dubey General Secretary, African Studies Association of India (ASA) and Chairman, Centre for West Asian and African Studies, SIS, JNU.

Prof. Ajay Dubey gave the introductory remarks. He said African diaspora is the largest diaspora among all the diasporas. Among the diasporas the study of Indian diaspora is of recent one. The Indian diaspora represents Indian diversity. In comparison African diaspora is also diverse, older and well spread out around the world.

Prof. Zeleza said that this lecture is a part of the ongoing project to study African diaspora in different parts of the world. For this project he is using the Atlantic model of studying the diaspora.

The use of term African diaspora is of recent one. Instead diaspora the terms like Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness were used to denote the African identity. Earlier the major exponents of the black movement were Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, and Franz Fanon. The emergence of study of African Diaspora was due to various factors. They are Intellectual dynamics, Institutional dynamics, and ideological imperatives. The emergence of the study of African diaspora was due to the emergence of post-colonial states and the impact of globalisation on them. This was helped by the cultural study and the emergence of identity as a tool of study.

Recently, the interest in the diaspora study was enhanced by the decision of various universities of the world to establish centres and departments for the study of diaspora. Various projects and pilot studies were started to understand the dynamics of African diaspora. The ideological imperatives also supported the development of African diaspora studies. In the age of globalisation various governments are looking towards diaspora for investment,

propagate and lobby for the mother country. The remittance of Africans to their countries is a huge amount. It is around \$50 billion in a year. It is huge money considering most of the African countries are facing economic problem and debt crisis. For many countries in Africa is more than the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in their country. On the other hand diasporas are also become conscious of their image, money and power. They have also started bargaining in order to invest or help the host country.

According to Prof. Zeleza there are many challenges in defining African diaspora. First question may be asked who is an African diaspora? Then the nature of the process and the periodicity from which one would be considered as diaspora. In this case the period of migration to the host country is very important. The dominant model for studying the African diaspora is the 'Atlantic Model'. Large number of people had migrated to North America as slaves from the West Africa region. Now the largest diaspora in the USA is the African diaspora.

In contrast to the migration process of African diaspora through Indian Ocean to Asia and specially India painted a different story. There are very close relationship between Asia and Africa from the ancient period. The migration process from Africa to Asia was of free movement. The migration process can be divided into various phases. There were evidences about the pre-historic interaction between Asia and Africa. In the ancient period there were interaction between Egyptians and Arabs in Asia and with Greeks and Romans. In the Islamic period the migration process from Africa was mainly from North and East Africa to India. In the modern times during the period of colonial rule and in the present era there was migration from Africa to India.

The whole migration process was characterized by small, slow and for a very long period of time. The interesting fact of African migrants to India is they are completely assimilated with Indian culture and way of life. The role of Islam in the whole integration process is significant. One of significant tenant of this religion is that it is non-racial. They are also known by different names as in Gujarat they are known as Siddhis. In the end Prof. Zeleza advised not to impose a model to study the African diaspora  
*Report by Dr. B. K. Pratihari*

## **Yatra: The Journey, A bi-monthly magazine launched in Trinidad & Tobago**

Yatra is a bi-monthly journal published by the Information Wing of the High Commission of India, Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago.



**Shri Malay Mishra,**  
Indian High  
Commissioner to  
Trinidad & Tobago

Editor of the Yatra: The  
Journey

Yatra promises to be an important vehicle for facilitating exchanges, both within the community of Indian origin and also between Trinidad and Tobago population. The journal is edited by the High Commissioner of India to Trinidad & Tobago Shri Malay Mishra.

## **Indian mission in Dubai to launch radio programme**

**Dubai, 03 April , 2009**

After launching a monthly magazine to project India and the Indian diaspora in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Indian consulate has launched a weekly radio programme on Saturday to complement the publication.

Named India Matters, same as the magazine that was launched on March 29 by former president A P J Abdul Kalam, the new radio programme will be aired on FM 105.4 Radio Spice every Saturday between 6 and 7 p.m.

The one-hour show will be packed with news, views and interviews regarding consulate services, India-UAE relations and trade and tourism in India, according to a statement issued by the Indian mission. It will aim to provide information on the latest developments in India, as well as events and happenings relating to India and the Indian community in the UAE.

"Radio is a very powerful medium and we want to take full advantage of it," India's Consul General in Dubai Venu Rajamony said in a statement.

"This is an effort to reach out to a wider audience. The idea is to complement the magazine, which will come out every month, with a broadcast every week. This will help us to get the information out to our audience and bring us feedback much quicker," he said.

Radio Spice caters to the varying musical tastes of the South Asian community in the UAE broadcasting mainly in Hindi and English. It offers popular music, news, including business and sports, contests and utilities.

There are around 1.5 million expatriate Indians in the UAE.

## **Recession forces 1.5 lakh Indians return home**

**NRI News, 08 July, 2009**

Nearly 50,000 to 150,000 Indian workers, most of them from the Gulf countries, have probably returned to the country due to the global economic slowdown, Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi informed parliament Wednesday. In his written reply to a question, Ravi told the Lok Sabha that the workers in the United Arab Emirates seemed to be most affected.

He noted that the Indian missions in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar have not reported any 'large-scale adverse impact on Indian workers', though there have been 'reports of some job losses'.

The Indian embassy in the UAE could not give precise figures of returnees, but indicated that the number was very large. 'It is estimated that ranging from 50,000 to 1,50,000 workers have returned to India as a result of the delay in execution of projects due to economic slow down and recession,' Vayalar Ravi said several of these workers have returned to India only temporarily, that is, on leave without pay and expect to go back to the UAE once the economy revives and projects restarted.

The Indian high commission in Kuala Lumpur has told the overseas Indian affairs ministry that a small number of Indian workers has returned due to slowdown in the Malaysian economy. But, there have been no reports of such returns from Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Brunei, Libya, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Gulf countries account for 90 percent of Indian immigrants, most of them blue-collar workers. Indian professionals in the western countries like Germany, Canada and Britain have not shown any trend of returning home, despite these economies going into recession.

The United States, which has a large Indian diaspora, has been one of the hardest-hit economies in the current slowdown that has affected all sections of people. But Indian professionals in the US have not suffered job losses, due to their 'indispensability' to their organisations, the minister noted. 'The exact number of Indians affected by the recession is indeterminate,' he added.

The ministry was expecting a budgetary support of Rs.100 crore (Rs.1 billion) for setting up a fund for returning Indian workers but the request could not be accommodated in the union budget presented Monday.

### **NRI's get return gifts as West regains financial health**

Gayatri Nayak & Ram N ET  
Bureau , Sahgal, 25 June 2009,

The Lehman collapse shook the faith of the Indian diaspora in the western banking system and led them to remit funds to their relations and friends back ho-me. These funds found their way into the local

banking system and assets, such as stocks and bonds, which offered better returns on investment than comparable assets in countries where the diaspora are scattered, particularly the US.

Now, with the hint of stability returning to global financial market, the returns on these funds are finding their way back to the diaspora. This may be corroborated by the latest RBI data, which show that the value of

gifts remitted by resident Indians under the liberalised remittance scheme (LRS) touched \$133m in FY09 (Apr-Mar), up 90% from \$70.3m in the previous fiscal.

One of the probable reasons for huge rise could be that NRIs took advantage of interest rate arbitrage,|| said G Narayanan, executive director, Indian Overseas Bank. —They sent money to India at a time when domestic interest rates were high and subsequently withdraw the money back when rates started softening. Besides, an NRI gets lower interest on deposits made directly (by them through various NRI schemes) than a local resident. Thus, it could have made more sense for them to invest through relatives, who are now remitting it back.“

For instance, the interest rate on a domestic deposit of one year earned up to 10% until October \_08, while the return on NRI deposits, linked to prevailing London interbank offered rate (Libor), on an annualized basis ended up being less by at least 4-5%. Apart from this, residents here increased remittances by way of gifts after witnessing an increase in prosperity levels over the years because of the booming market conditions in the run up to the crisis.

—A sizeable amount of the gifts has been made by parents of the diaspora who benefited from good market conditions in the previous years and an improvement in their savings,|| said a senior official from State Bank of India (SBI), the biggest authorized dealer in the remittance business. —The individual limit of \$5000 a year for each individual under the LRS has been successively increased since 2004. The relatives are taking full advantage of the liberalized limit.”

From \$50,000 a year in December 06, the ceiling was hiked to \$100,000 a year in May 07 and further to \$200,000 in December 07.

## **Sikhs in Collaboration with United Nations to respond to climate change and Global warming**

Punjab Newsline Network  
Washington, 25 June 2009

The Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE) has partnered with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to help make the world greener by announcing the launch of a new initiative called EcoSikh.

EcoSikh is the Sikh community's contribution to the UNARC Seven Year Plan project, whose aim is to help the world's major religions create long term plans to improve their relationship with the environment. The plans, in which each tradition celebrates its unique relationship with the environment and puts its teachings on ecology into action, will be launched at a major Event at Windsor Castle this November, and will also be used to inform the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen this December.

EcoSikh provides an unprecedented opportunity for the Sikh community. Throughout our history, Sikhs have been pioneers in environmental work and continue to be so today. EcoSikh will help the community to connect all that is already being done and will enable us to forge new paths toward the creation of a sustainable and eco friendly planet,|| said Dr. Rajwant Singh, Chairperson of SCORE.

SCORE and ARC are hosting a consultation in New Delhi in July to give Sikh community leaders – both in India and in the diaspora – the opportunity to discuss and agree the EcoSikh plan -and establish the infrastructure needed for its implementation.

—The Sikh Five Year Plan is the next historic step in the Sikh communities' commitment to walk faithfully alongside the rest of Creation

into a future which they believe they can make both better and greener,|| said Martin Palmer, Secretary General of ARC.

The plan focuses on five key areas -assets, education, media/advocacy, eco-twinning, and celebration. So, for example, the Sikh gurdwaras in India feed some 30 million of people every day, free of charge. Their energy and food sourcing are therefore highly important as a means of living their commitment for creation and walking lightly on the earth. From this also arises the commitment to define what an eco-gurdwara could and should be.

According to Rajwant Singh, "The whole undertaking is an articulation of a Sikh eco-theology that finds its roots in Guru Nanak Dev Ji and continues through the work of modern day Sikh eco-patrons like Bhagat Puran Singh Ji.

### **International**

#### **Zimbabwe Diaspora want involvement in new constitution**

Violet Gonda  
30 June 2009

The quest for a new constitution has begun in Zimbabwe and many exiles are demanding that they be allowed to make a contribution to the formulation of the constitution. It is understood that the Diaspora population is around four million -a figure that now exceeds the population of some of the provinces in Zimbabwe. It is because of this that groups like the Zimbabwe Exiles Forum (ZEF) has started a campaign to ensure that the voices of those abroad are reflected, especially on issues regarding dual citizenship and voting rights.

While the former ZANU PF government encouraged the Diaspora community to send much needed money home through the 'Homelink Money Transfer' system, the regime

didn't set up facilities to allow the exiled community to vote.

ZEF Executive Director Gabriel Shumba said any constitution outcome will not be legitimate, if there is no Diaspora contribution, as a third of the Zimbabwean population would have been neglected. Shumba was speaking after a 'Diaspora Constitutional Symposium' held in South Africa at the weekend. Scores of Zimbabweans and organisations attended and it was resolved that they are an indispensable player in the reconstruction of Zimbabwe. The ZEF pressure group organised the conference, which was graced by the Minister of Constitutional Affairs Eric Matinenga, labour leaders and other stakeholders.

According to the ZEF, Minister Matinenga acknowledged the importance of those who live outside the country in the constitution making process. Shumba said resolutions formulated at the end of the one day symposium included the setting up of a Diaspora representative structure to engage with the Parliamentary Select Committee on the constitution and the Minister; the setting up of a website to put forward ideas regarding expectations; and emailing submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee.

Currently Zimbabweans also lose their rights to vote if they stay outside their constituency for two years and the feeling among the participants was that the Diaspora should be allowed to cast their votes in general elections from outside the country.

Shumba also said this draft does not recognise the Diaspora vote and entrenches too many powers in the President. He said: —Any new constitution that comes out as a product of the Kariba Draft will be rejected. The Draft was created by three political parties to the exclusion of civil society, church groups and other interested groups.||

Meanwhile the Zimbabwe Exiles Forum plans to hold similar symposiums in Botswana,

Mozambique, Namibia and possibly the United Kingdom.

## **"Right time for Diaspora to invest"**

Tanjug Balgrade, 28

June 2009

Serbian minister for the Diaspora Srđan Srećković says now is the right time for the diaspora to invest in Serbia. He "announced the beginning of a new era in the relations" between the home country and the Serbs abroad, with a more responsible and committed approach of the Serbian state institutions towards them.

At a business forum dedicated to economic cooperation between Serbia and the diaspora held at the Serbian Chamber of Commerce (PKS) earlier this week, Srećković said that, in 2008, some USD 5.2bn of remittances arrived to the country, "that is, USD 14mn daily".

Pointing out that Serbia's economic cooperation with the diaspora has not been at the suitable level so far, he said that Serbian citizens from abroad have invested about USD 500mn in the SME sector, creating around 20,000 jobs.

## **Conferences**

### **A conference on media in the diaspora began**



The second conference on Media in Diaspora, started in Belgrade on 24 June 2009, organized by the Ministries for Diaspora and Culture and press associations in Serbia gathered 50 Serb medias from four continents. Diaspora Minister Srđan Srećković said that the gathering is an introduction to Vidovdan

Diaspora Days, Time is coming in which the state will be applying a more responsible policy to the diaspora, to benefit both Serbia and all its citizens, wherever they live, he said. Culture Minister Nebojsa Bradic said diaspora media will always have in that ministry a partner for work on quality and progress in information quality.

## Book News

### Midnight's Diaspora: Encounters with Salman Rushdie

This book is mainly a dialogue between the author and a group of intellectuals and writers on the writings of Salman Rushdie. Salman Rushdie remained by far the most controversial and famous living novelist in the world. Rushdie became a global figure whose work is read and studied by a wide variety of people—both for its extraordinary literary achievements and for the insights. His writings also gave the readers an insight to the significant debates of our time.

This volume brought together a distinguished group of critics including Rushdie himself, to explore the political and cultural contexts of Rushdie's novels. The subject matter of the write ups are sub continental issues and the many milieu of Islam.

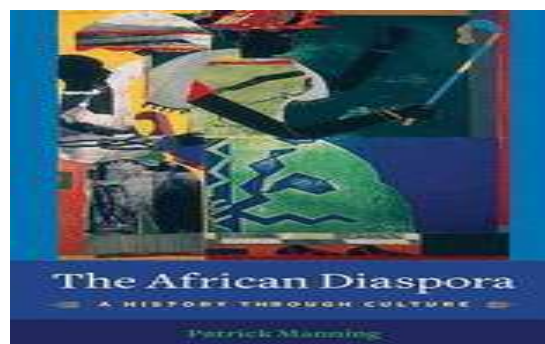
The interviews of Rushdie highlighted his thoughts on literary and political subjects. Each of the essays discussed Rushdie's work in a distinct and original way. This work with a new perspective will appeal to a wide variety of readers interested in Rushdie's work. but also in the many contentious political issues it raises.

### Patrick Manning's "The African Diaspora"

Patrick Manning is *Andrew W. Mellon Professor of World History* and Director of the *World History Center* at the University of Pittsburgh and president of the *World History Network*, a nonprofit corporation fostering research in world history.

This book deals with the movement of African slaves across the Atlantic from 1600 to 1800. It

discusses with details the points of origin of African slaves in Africa and their destination in America. This resulted in the change and social conflict both in Africa and USA. This book also discusses the linkages among various regions of Africa and America and the experience of Africans in the material and free culture of America.



Then there was a struggle for survival among black people. The earlier part of the book discusses the connections among the African peoples and the later part of the book deals with the struggles for emancipation, citizenship, and social equality. This book deals with these issues from 1400 to the present and the geographical areas include Africa, the Americas, and for black populations throughout the world.

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