

Brief Report of the Conference

National Conference Migration and Diaspora: Theory, Cultures and Literatures

National Conference titled “**Migration and Diaspora: Theory, Cultures and Literatures**”, jointly organized by Bharati College, Delhi University and GRFDT, sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and Department of English, Delhi University.

Two Day National Conference was jointly organized by Bharati College, Delhi University and GRFDT during 24-25 March 2017. The conference was sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and Department of English, Delhi University.

The welcome address began with Dr. Mukti Sanyal, Acting Principal, Bharati college. Dr. Nandini C. Sen, convener of the seminar gave a brief introduction regarding the scope of the conference. She also introduced chief guest Prof. Anil Joshi, noted environmentalist and Padmashri awardee. Our guest of honour was Prof. Niranjana Kumar, Dept of Hindi(DU) and also a member of governing body, Bharati College. The keynote address was given by Prof. Christel Devadawson who addressed the notion of ‘Diaspora’ in the classical studies biblical time through her paper on Homeland: Hostland and the story of the Ruth’. She focused on diaspora and its roots in the Middle East through slides and pictorial representations. She focused on the complications associated with the word ‘Diaspora’.

The plenary address was given by Prof.G.J.V. Prasad, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, JNU. He spoke about classical diaspora, within India, giving examples of Parsi and Sindhi communities. He spoke about the complications associated with the diasporic subjectivity, that is, what it means to be a diasporic within one’s own country and abroad. The session was chaired by Mr. Ankur Gupta, Dept of sociology, South Asian University who concluded that diaspora has multiple facets.

Parallel Session-1 titled “Question of Identity in Diaspora Literature” was chaired by Prof. G.J.V.Prasad. The paper

presenters had a range of themes dealing with identity and its relation to home and abroad movies like “ Bend it Like Beckham”. One of the most interesting paper was by Dr.Rekha Gupta, Associate Professor, Bharati College who had discussed on the topic of psychological development in migrant children. The chair concluded that identity and homeland are the major influences behind the diasporic subjectivity.

Parallel session-2 was titled “Memory, Oral History and Language’. Dr.MuktiSanyal was the chair. The main focus of this session was the case studies of Migrant communities such as the Tibetans, residing in Delhi. The notion of assimilation and marginalization were the key areas where all the paper presenters focused upon.



Dr. Nandini C Sen, Convener

The lunch session was titled “Migration, Diaspora and Literature”. Dr. Nandini Sen was the chair. Ms. Nabanita Chakravarty’s paper was on cultural identity and memory within the Bangladeshi Diaspora with influence Monica Ali’s Brick Lane. Some of the other presenters focused on the notion of nostalgia and identity and also customs and its assertion.

The next session was titled “Migration and Diaspora: Emerging perceptions and challenges”. Dr. Himma Nandujog was the chair.

The session focused on the various areas of conflict relation to the perception of Diaspora. Hina Marjani's paper focused on India's foreign policy, Non-alignment movement and its effect on the diasporic community, migration from Bangladesh to Assam, Kashmir conflict and the legal institutions of colonial Australia were discussed within their session.

The last session of the day was "Culture, cinema and Diaspora". It was chaired by Dr. Suresh Kumar, HOD, African Studies, DU. The session discussed the representation of the migrant subjects in films and music. "Bride and Prejudice", "The Mistress of Spices" were some of the movies which were discussed.

The notion of culture, marriage, 1st generation diaspora and 2nd, 3rd generation of diasporic subjectivity were the key areas of discussion in this session. Dr. Gitanjali Chawla's paper was particularly interesting because it looked at the Punjabi Pop-folk culture and the various contentions within it.

The second day began with an equally illuminating note with a Plenary session. Prof. Narang presented the world view of a migrant who went on to form the diasporic Indian community across the globe. The migrants of the earlier generation were forcefully taken as indentured labourers in different parts of the world as part of colonial policy. Most of them, over the years, became the backbone of the modernization projects of North America, Europe, South East Asia and the Africas (especially South Africa). However, the acknowledgement of this contribution has never been forthcoming. The literary efforts of diasporic writers like VS Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri form the absent world of the diasporic community in the developed nations. These literary works provided the emotional space for the diaspora to relate within homeland.

The next session titled "Migration and Diaspora: Emerging Perceptions and Challenges" was chaired by Dr. Hina Nandrajog. The session focused on the various areas of conflict with relation to the perception of Diaspora. The session had papers focusing on Indian foreign policy and diaspora, Non-alignment movement and its effect on

the diasporic community, migration from Bangladesh and Assam, Kashmir conflict and diaspora, migration, crime and legal institutions in colonial Australia.

The theme for the next session was the study of diaspora through cinema and literature. Dr. Anuradha Ghosh presented a paper on diaspora and transnationalism in cinematic frames from the melancholic representation of the migrant in early cinema to the current optimism predicted on the new liberalized order. Dr. Ghosh sought to recover the agency of the migrant subject. Zakaria Bouhala's paper on Tourism and Terrorism was based on Laila Lalami's *Hope and other dangerous pursuits*. The paper tried to situate the experience of a different category of subject. The experience of the illegal immigrant in the developed world. Mahmud Al Zayad's paper was a close reading of Edward Said's *Out of place*. The paper argued that the 'other' is situated only within the self in a dialectical relationship. Other speakers also contributed equally valuable insights from Amitav Ghosh and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The parallel session on global diaspora also produced an interesting discussion. Dr. Abhay Chawla's



examination of the condition of the Meo diaspora in Pakistan and Rajneesh Kumar Gupta's paper on the Indian Diaspora in East Africa brought out the key issue of globalization as a driving force behind their many experiences. In a different take on the topic, Matt Kramer talked about predatory leadership as a

theoretical framework for understanding migration.

Session eight on weaker sections, resistance and Diaspora Literature examined the experiences of those migrant communities who find themselves on the margins and therefore are doubly disadvantaged. In this context, Nithya Gopi's presentation on Benjamin's *Goat days*- a recent sensation in Kerala literary circles- depicted the marginality of the once prosperous Gulf Malayalis. Raqeeb Raza's paper entitled "Invisible Migrancy: The Politics of Sexual Migration" was a sociological and historical analysis of the migration trends of the sexual minorities.

The plenary session two was chaired by Dr. Nandini C. Sen. She introduced the speaker Dr. Baidik Bhattacharya. His talk addressed a particular contradiction in Naipaul's works—his mostly reductionist reading of postcolonial histories (especially of the New World), and his strikingly original insights into the histories of the indentured communities in the Caribbean. To address this, the talk suggested, one needs to identify two different strands in Naipaul's writing: the canonical, that often finds expression in the received traditions of English literature; and the anthropological, that attempts to capture the immediately local. In his writing, these two remain forever separate, and his fiction makes a special attempt to inhabit the gap between the two. The talk concluded with the suggestion that Naipaul's circulation in the Anglophone world literature is facilitated by this almost schizophrenic structure of his fiction.

Parallel session nine on Diaspora: various Views was chaired by Dr. Abhay Chawla. It brought together different disciplinary perspectives on the migrant subject across the world. For example, Monika Bisht's paper on the In-

dian students in the US located the mobility factor of highly skilled Indian students against the backdrop of the current knowledge economy.

Parallel session ten titled 'Diaspora, post colonial and Ideology' was chaired by Dr. Rekha Sapra. The discussion focused on the ideological moorings of the post-colonial subject and its relation to diaspora studies. The session had five papers discussing the various nuances of the theme.

The valedictory address was given by Prof. Brij Maharaj, from Kwa Zulu Natal University, Durban, South Africa. His talk addressed the challenges and issues of Hindu Diaspora in South Africa. Dr. M. Mahalingam, president of GRFDT summed up the seminar by giving the main highlights of the seminar. The seminar was drawn to a close with the vote of thanks by Dr. Shivani Jha from Bharati College. It was followed by cultural program being performed by the students of the college.

Report by Dr. M. Mahalingam, GRFDT



Release of the Book titled “Through the Diasporic Lens”
 Edited by Dr. Nandini C Sen