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**AMITAV GHOSH'S SEA OF POPPIES: A
TRANSNATIONAL
DIASPORA FROM ROOTS TO ROUTES**

ANITA SHARMA



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Abstract

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AMITAV GHOSH'S SEA OF POPPIES: A TRANSNATIONAL DIASPORA FROM ROOTS TO ROUTES

ANITA SHARMA

Eyi Suvarnmayi Lanka mama na rochate

**Janani Janambhumischa
Swargadapi Gariyasi**

(Ramayana)

**(Even the golden Lanka fails to please my mind
because my own motherland is greater and more
gracious than even heaven)**

The above lines from Valmiki's (the great ancient Indian poet) *Ramayana* describe the painful mental condition of Laxmna being cut off from his motherland and thus provided a very powerful example of Indian Diaspora experience even before us. The two great epics of India, Ramayana and Mahabharata, celebrate forced exile of the respective protagonists where they had to leave their roots inevitably under adverse circumstances in search of new routes. But the real epic of Indian Diaspora begins with the *girmit* experience in the 1830s after the abolition of slavery and introduction of the indenture system by the powerful Imperial Empires. These migrants on route would probably sing: *We/ the migratory birds/are here this season/thinking/we will fly back to our homes/for sure/No one knows/which invisible cage imprisons us?/And the flight begins to die slowly/in our wings.* (Kalsey,40) Ghosh's novels have a Diaspora community that stays outside the legacy of national identities. For him movement away from home implies a movement away from harmony.

The term 'Diaspora' suggests the idea of exile, migration, displacement, dispersal and fragmentation leading to nostalgia, heteroglossia, and sometimes even xenophiles. In much of the literature of Diaspora there is a presumed relationship between the Diasporas community and the land which they leave. The loss of an identity, or the imposition of new identities in the globalized world, has become a fundamental issue in

colonial and postcolonial studies. Contemporary fiction writers like Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor and Amitav Ghosh are engaged in historical, ethnic, cultural, and political conflicts that are re-shaping the previous assumptions. Individual and mass movements in their multiple forms – journey, migration, exile, return – have become a new area of debate which figures conspicuously in the Indian literature. The exiled community or the migrants go to the other land either due to the strong ideological differences with the rulers of the motherland or in search of a dreamy future. The New Oxford English Dictionary defines 'Diaspora' as the dispersion of the Jews after the exile, among Gentile nations; Jews so dispersed. Etymologically 'dia' means 'through' and 'speiro' means 'to scatter'. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define the term 'Diaspora' as "the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions..." (68) In other words, anywhere in the world, Diaspora groups are immigrants with plural language, plural cultures, plural identities, and plural roots. Dayanand Mishra too remarks: "People of Diaspora consciously choose to migrate to alien country of their choice severing their roots from their native community as well as from their nation state with a hope to live a happy life there. (172). Often the Diaspora identities constructed in motion affirms multiple attachments, deteriorations and cultural hybridism. " Ghosh's imagination is as necessarily diasporic as it is postcolonial being a product of specific histories of the subcontinent in the 20th century." (Dhawan, 221)

Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* is one of the best narratives of migration where a transnational Diaspora mobilizes a collective identity of people dissolving their inessential ethos and milieus'. This first kind of Indian Diaspora during early nineteenth century sets forth seeking new routes their assumed bright future, leaving behind their historical roots under the British nexus of Imperialism and Capitalism. The novel can be called

a historical fiction, a colonial text, postcolonial, exilic, politically laid, multicultural, cosmopolitan or a hybrid text. In Amitav Ghosh's fiction the historical facts in terms of time and space forms an integral part of a work of art transcending the creative expression to achieve wider dimensions of universality induced with social, economical, political and linguistic consciousness. This is amply reflected in the novels of the period like Raj Rao's 'Kanthapura', Mulk Raj Anand's 'Coolie', William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', George Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty four and Amitav Ghosh's ' *The circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and *Sea of Poppies* (2008). Even his non-fictional works like *In an Antique Land* (1992); *Countdown* (1999); *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma* (1998); ; *The Indian and the India* (2002), and *Incendiary Circumstances* (2006) are full of such notions. In his interview to John C Hawley, Ghosh mention, " my fundamental interest is in people, in individuals and their specific predicament." (Hawley,6) His writings endeavor to recuperate the silenced voices of those not represented in the historical record and gives voice and place to the marginalized and underprivileged. Amitav Ghosh, the recipient of Padmashri in 2007, is a writer concerned with India's place in larger international cultural networks. "Ghosh has a distinctive style of writing that synthesizes the imagination of a writer with the insightful detaining of an anthropologist. He takes up the obscured events in history and transcends the boundaries of fiction/nonfiction by sprinkling over them the colors of his imagination" (Ravi Bhusan and Daisy, 134). Ghosh mediates upon a core set of issues from a new perspective ; the legacy of colonial knowledge; colonized societies, people, ideas: the formation and re-formation of identities in colonial and post colonial societies; skepticism and socio-economic struggle for survival; and an engagement with cultural multiplicity through economic migrants, travelers, students, prisoners, researchers, settlers, peasants and indentured laborers. In his novels Wealth, Power and Privilege establish new strife among the people, societies and nation states.

Historically, the novel is set just prior to the Opium Wars and revolves around the British involvement in

India and their trade practices exporting opium from India to China. Opium war was fought between 1839-42 between East India Company and a weakened China under the Qing Dynasty to acquire 'free trade' across China for British merchants. Since British trading began with China in the sixteenth century there was a high demand for tea, silk and porcelain in Britain. But due to the low demand of the European commodities in the East, Britain had a large trade deficit with China and had to pay for its imported goods with silver. In 1773, the governor-general of India, Warren Hastings, decided to establish an East India company opium monopoly in Bengal, encouraging Indian peasants to plant huge swathes of poppies and then illegally exporting the exceptionally high quality opium to China to counter Britain's deficit. The opium trade took off rapidly, and the flow of silver began to reverse. Despite several attempts by the Chinese authorities to curb the trade, by the 1820, China imported 900 tons of opium from Bengal annually, enough to supply 12.5 million smokers. Chinese society was crippled and the whole economy disrupted. Eventually what started as a trade dispute twice erupted in war. China's defeat forced the government to tolerate the opium trade, opening up several ports to foreign commerce and yielding Hong Kong to Britain. This humiliation at the hand of foreign powers contributed to the downfall of the Qing dynasty in 1949 that China's opium pandemic estimated at some 20 million addicts was finally brought under control. Ghosh also reveals the damage done by British colonial rule and the devastation wreaked upon the Indian Economy, as well as society at large. Although apparently Ghosh's creative inspiration was the indentured people of India, he says in an interview. After the abolishment of slavery by Britain the Empire's plantations in Far East and the West Indies needed workers who were slaves by another name- 'grimitiyas' indentured laborers. With a signed contract or 'girit' (a corrupted derivative of English 'agreement'). Shiploads of coolies traveled the Indian Ocean under horrible conditioned to escape the dismal poverty and deprivation in their native land and to supply cheap labor for the British sugar planters on such Islands as Mauritius, Fiji and Trinidad. Like Columbus they were running away from their native roots in search of new unknown routes. Probably unknown to them, Mauritius is to function as a strange kind of utopia for them: a utopia that would force them to face all kinds of adversities against the dead 'Sea of Poppies'. Ghosh avers:*opium was the exclusive monopoly of the British produced ... and packaged entirely under the supervision of the East India Company....* (85). Thus the 1800s were a time of

enormous social disruption and displacement in large parts of India. Poverty and loss of land holdings forced people to search new routes leaving behind their native roots.

The novel projects the socio-economic themes of the 19th century: the forced cultivation of opium as a cash crop in Bihar and Bengal for Chinese market, its disastrous consequences and transport of first batch of Indian Diaspora through the ship *Ibis*. The *Ibis* in Egyptian mythology was a sacred bird of religious veneration, particularly associated with God Thoth, one of the most-important deities of the Egyptian pantheon who was usually depicted with the head of an Ibis. Thoth served as a mediating power, specially between good and evil, making sure neither had a decisive victory over the other and was the master of both physical and moral (i.e. Divine) law. *Sea of Poppies* like a travelogue becomes an important socio-political document that draws its raw material from history, sociology, anthropology and politics. It traverses the dark path of Indian colonial history by exposing the shrewd business acumen of British, who scrapped India of its riches and Chinese of their discretion by poisoning them with opium. *Ibis*, the ship originally 'blackbirder' in America was used to transport slaves from Africa, but after the abolition of slavery, the schooner is sold to British shipping company Burnham Bros, in Calcutta to transport indentured laborers to British colonies in the Caribbean Islands. Even the captain Mr. Chillingworth is an opium addict, first mate Mr. Crowley is a rogue and second mate is a mulatto freedman, Zachary Reid the leader of lascar, and Serang Ali, has 'a face that would have earned the envy of Genghis Khan' (14). *Sea of Poppies* (2008) is the first volume of what will be the *Ibis* trilogy. The story is symbolically, narrated under three symbolic parts namely 'Land', 'River' and 'Sea'. Land symbolizes social, political and economical strife of people for survival which passes on to River symbolizing flowing or running after the dreams those which becomes impossible and difficult to attain on the rough surface of vast unknown Sea. The story is set prior to the Opium Wars, on the banks of the holy river Ganges and in Calcutta. The author compares

Ganges to the Nile, the lifeline of the Egyptian civilization, attributing the provenance and growth of these civilizations to these selfless, ever flowing bodies. He portrays the characters as poppy seeds emanating in large numbers from the field to form a sea, where every single seed is uncertain about its future. The novel is an epic saga with multitude of characters in love hate relationships, "detailed description of opium production" in north east India by British Trade Company, the period of the 19th century seafaring and picturizing life in 1830's Calcutta. Imperialism seems to be beautiful but deadly like the poppy flowers.

The story begins with Deeti, a simple pious lady, caring mother and an efficient housewife. Married to addict Hukum Singh, a crippled worker in the Ghazipur Opium Factory, the unfortunate Deeti figures out that on her wedding night, she was drugged with opium by her mother-in-law, so that her brother-in-law could consummate the marriage in place of her 'infertile' husband. This brother-in-law is the real father of Deeti's daughter Kabutri. When her husband dies, Deeti sends Kabutri to stay with relatives. Deeti took almost certain to meet her doom when she chooses to go through with the 'sati' ritual (immolation on her husband's funeral pyre), but then Kalua, the low caste ox man from the neighboring village, comes to her rescue. The couple flees and unites by exchanging garlands. This is not acceptable to their fellow villagers. In order to escape the anger of Deeti's in-laws, she and Kalua become indentured servants on the *Ibis*. Some other stories do add to the plight of the main character in the novel. Zachary Reid, an American sailor born to a slave mother and white father, receives a lot of attention. He is looked down by Whites and hated by Asians and Orientals. His neglected identity made him sadistically cruel and wicked. He took pleasure in cruel flogging of Kalua, and brutally punishes other people on board. He has been on the *Ibis* since the schooner started her arduous journey, and hopes to die with it. Neel Rattan Halder, a wealthy 'rajah' whose dynasty has been ruling the *Zamindari* of Rashkali for centuries, is cleverly confronted by Mr. Burnham with the need to sell off his estates in order to pay for the debt he had

incurred when trading opium with China was at the height of the opium trade. He is being cheated and robbed of his riches by the British as it was the trend of the Empire. This story is based on the forgery trial of Prawnkissen Holder in 1829 at the Supreme Court of Calcutta. The book also features Paulette, a French orphan, who had also grown up in India. Paulette's upbringing in India has also made her feel more at ease with Indian manners, food, and clothing than with Western ones. France being the rival of British Empire made Paulette's life hell and she disguises herself to escape to a new life through Ibis. As the stories merge, each carrying its share of joys and sorrows, the Ibis becomes a shelter to those in destitution. After much strife, conspiracy and bloodshed on board the Vessel, Neel, Ah Fatt, Jodu, Serang Ali, the leader and Kalua abandon the Ibis in a boat unaware of the destination the sea waves will carry them to. The narrative closes with the Ibis tossing in mid-ocean amidst a storm carrying Deeti, Paulette, Zachary and Nob Krishna. Tyrannical Bhyro Singh and villainous Mr. Crowley are killed by Kalua and Ah Fatt respectively. The stories of the novel interweave various myths, beliefs, languages, cultural and historical elements to portray true picture of the then respective society and the origins and transport of the first batch of Indian Diaspora. Ghosh protagonists are the neglected subjects of the colonial enterprise instead of powerful White masters unlike Rudyard Kipling and E. M. Forester. The process had started in 1834 resulting into the creation of a distinct set of people bonded with the force of adversity that they had faced together. In the first part of the *Ibis* trilogy, it is Paulette who tells Deeti that they were "ship-siblings—*jahaj bhais* and *jahaj bahens*—to each other." (527)

The idea struck Deeti with its force of simplicity. There were "no differences between... [them:] jahaz-bhai and jahazbahen to each other... children of the ship... [that was] a great wooden mai-báp, an adoptive ancestor and parent of dynasties yet to come" (SP 528).

Deepak Thakur adds in the discussion that "the movement of the novel is from Land to River to sea. Dissolution of sense of place is gradual and purposeful" (Thakur, 54). On *Ibis* the sense of place dissolves as people from

diverse cultures are thrown together on the journey to Mauritius. Indrajeet Hazra opines that *Sea of Poppies* also celebrates the sea faring lives of the lascars, the multi-cultural, multi-national groups of sailors across the Indian Ocean" (Hazra, 9). During his research on the subject of indenture, Ghosh discovered that contrary to popular perception, many people came back home after completing their indenture contract, though most people chose not to return to India. Ghosh also found letters written by people in Mauritius inviting their relatives and friends to join them. Another myth of indenture is that it was mainly the lower castes that migrated, but Ghosh discovered many Brahmins and other upper castes among the indentured workers. In the novel the Duffadar tells Kalua: "caste doesn't matter...all kinds of men are eager to sign up—Brahmins, Ahirs, Chamars, Telis... they be young and able-bodied and willing to work." (302). They carried their songs and rituals which provided solace in their time of suffering and dislocation. There are Indians and Westerners, Asians and Africans in the story. They fill the narrative with sprinklings of Bhojpuri, Bengali, Lascari, Hindustani, French, American, Anglo-Indian words and phrases, and a fantastic spectrum of English from the pidgin of the seafarers to the comically garbled English of Bengali Babu Nobkrishna and Indian 'Foreigner' Paulette Lambert--that result in what Peter Parker has called, in his *The Sunday Times* review, "a glorious Babel of a novel" (TK, Ghosh, Z). Ibis like Calcutta becomes a polyglot community where meanings of words are broken down, shifted and relocated. Cut off from their roots in transient and looking ahead to fresh start the migrants invent new names, histories, stories, secrets and new identities'. Indentured immigration created a Diasporas of Indians that is spread all over the world. "The process that had started in 1834 and continued till 1920 had resulted into the creation of a distinct set of people bounded with the force of adversity that they had faced together. Ibis carrying coolies and convicts turns out to be a cultural utopia where all barriers of culture are laid defenseless when confronted with humanitarian ethics. According to Lal the people were hit hard not only by the natural calamities but also by "the crippling effects of

British revenue policy which caused crippling indebtedness, fragmented land holdings and scattered families... migration to the colonies was an extension of the process of displacement already underway on the subcontinent” (6).

The Report of the Truth and Justice Commission (TJC) mentions how immigrants were looted upon by the white men: “The *Dhangars*” are always spoken of as more akin to the monkey than the man. They have no religion, no education and in their present state, no want beyond eating, drinking and sleeping; and to procure which, they are willing to labor”. More than 1 million people crossed the black waters for a few paid labors in various colonies including Mauritius.. More than seventy five percent of them came from the Bhojpuri speaking North India. Deeti moving out of Bihar (Ghazipur) sees, “*hundreds of ...impoverished transients many of whom were willing to sweat themselves half to death for a few handfuls of rice....driven from their villagers by the flood of flowers that had washed over the countryside.*” (298). The narrator says, “*come the cold weather, the English sahibs would allow little else to be planted; their agents would go from home to home, forcing cash advances on the farmers, making them to sign asami contracts. It was impossible to say no to them*” (29-30). The description of the sudder opium factory at Ghazipur is based on a realistic account published in 1865 by its one time superintendent, J.W.S Mac Arthur. The scene at factory evokes horror and pity like Dickens novels, “*bare bodied men sunk waist deep in tanks of opium, tramping round and round to soften the sludge. Their eyes were vacant, glazed and yet somehow they managed to keep moving, as slow as ants in honey, tramping, treading.*” (94-95). Moreover, the subtle crop cycle that had developed through ages by the farmers was broken and was forced to grow commercial crops Poppy and Indigo for the benefit of British economy. The Masters not only exploited the natural resources of the country but also the human resources to their fullest.

The Socio-economic Subjugations goes on in the novel with “*transformation of feudal exploitation into capitalist exploitation*”. (Capital, 787). The peasants like Deeti and

her addict husband Hukam Singh were forced by the British Trading Company to grow poppy instead of staple food items causing agricultural collapse and thus destroying their families.. Similar Economic failure is experienced by Raja Neel Rattan by trying his hands in opium Trade and thus losing his Rashkali estate to the British. Physically too people worked in inhuman conditions in their fields, opium factories and even on *Ibis* to give a sense of pride and contentment to their masters. Judiciously speaking when Deeti is ready for self immolation under Hindu Practice of ‘sati’ no legal protection is provided to her by the British. Kalua after being flogged by Bhyro Singh becomes the victim of the combined hegemonies of British imperial power and native abhorrence for inter caste marriage to Deeti. On their way to the factory Kalua and Deeti watches the march of a large group of girmitiyas, “*a hundred strong or more; hemmed in by a ring of stick bearing guards...trudging wearily in the direction of the river*” (70) from where they will be ferried in the direction of the river. The Schooner *Ibis* acted as a microcosm providing suitable environment to a caste free social system in the island of Mauritius. The characters in the novel accept new anglicized identities tied together in a *jahaji nata*. Deeti become Aditi, *Dalit* Kalua rechristened Maddav Colver, Paulette impersonating the Gomasta Baboo, Nob Kissin’s niece Pultishwari, Jodu Calls himself Azad, and Zacchary calls as Zikri Malum running along Serang Ali. The subhuman plight of indentured laborers is affirmed by the captain of the ship, “*he obeys me... while you are on her (Ibis), you must obey Subedar Bhyro Singh as you would your own zamindars, and as he will be your mai-bap, just as I am his.*” (599). Heeru comments on the skewed female ratio towards men on *Ibis*. “*They say in Mareech, a woman on her will be torn apart...Devoured...so many men and so few women...can u think what it would be like, Bhauji, to be alone there.*” (653).

Emigration from India reports that the coolies were shipped in crowded vessels, just as the case in the dabusa of *Ibis*. They were not treated as human beings and the medical attendance was either inadequate or virtually absent (6). This resulted into many of them

dying during their transportation that took around ten weeks from Calcutta to Mauritius. The ‘Laskars’ were “put under hatches and guards—robbed and pillaged of the advances made to them by the Mauritian agents in Calcutta — shipped in large numbers on board vessels, without the requisite accommodation, food, or medical attendance”(Hugon 152) The term ‘Lascar’ (believed to derive from the Persian Lashkar, meaning an army, a camp or a band of followers) dates back to the early 1500s when it was used by Portuguese explores to describe the sailors they encountered from modern India, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, China, East Africa and Middle East. Zachary’s perception of lascars in the novel is indicative of nature of fluidity of place: *...lascars were a tribe of nation, like the Cherokee or Sioux: he discovered now that they came from places that were far apart, and had nothing in common, except the Indian Ocean; among them were Chinese and East Africans, Arabs and Malay’s, Bengalis and Goans, Tamils and Arakanese.* (SP 13) The moment of departure was a time of loss and displacement, but the indentured ‘girmityas’ found the means to endure it by taking pleasure in the little things of life. It was an alien world out at sea with a frightening unknown destiny awaiting them. But they slowly forged new relationships, and just as new friendships were made, enmities and rivalries also sprang up. Single women often found new husbands and protectors. ‘Lascari- the language of seafarers is a combination of patois, Hindustani, Malay, Chinese and English- is added to the colorful mix of languages, dialects and mannerisms of the diverse characters in the story. Zachary’s conversation with Monsieur d’ Epinay, who handed him a letter that was to be delivered to the owner of the ship in Calcutta, throws more light on the new trade of indentured labor. He told Zachary: *My canes are rotting in the fields’ ...Tell Mr. Burnham that I need men. Now that we may no longer have slaves in Mauritius, I must have coolies, or I am doomed.* (SP 21) Finally Burnham made it clear that it was not ‘slaves’ but ‘coolies’ that was to be transported this time. He said, *“Not slaves-coolies. Have you not heard it said that when God closes one door he opens another? When the doors of freedom were closed to*

the African, the lord opened them to a tribe that was yet more needful of it- the Asiatic” (SP 79). Even the religious sentiments are exploited for profitable trade by Mr. Burnham, *“Jesus Christ is Free Trade and Free Trade is Jesus Christ “and explained, “if it is God’s will that opium be used as an instrument to open China to his teachings”* (116). Their hypocritical humanism is exposed through Mr. Doughty’s remark, *“...indeed ,humanity demands it , we need only think of the poor Indian peasant-- what will become of him if his opium can’t be sold in China? “* (260). Colonizers “divide and rule” mind-set exploits natives to utmost for their huge capital gains.

Moreover Mr. Burnham also explains, *“The march to the shining city is never without pain, is it? Didn’t the Israelites suffer in the desert?”* (SP 79) “The novel is thus an intervention that addresses the relative neglect of studies of the Indian Ocean as a vital site of conflict, of heterogeneous historical encounters, of the flow of commodities, a site distinct from but with similarities to the Atlantic slave trade” (Arora 25). It illustrates “the connections between multiple histories and cultures in the nineteenth century through a mapping of the Indian Ocean as a rich geographical and socio-cultural place to study mobility of trade, people, ideas and practices.” (Arora 39). Colonialism has culturally and economically amalgamated Indian ethos and milieus with the selfish European sensibility resulting into political overtones, hypocritical society and the birth of “girmityas”, who gathers on *Ibis* in search of their futures. Babes Nob Kissin, a mysterious passenger comments on *Ibis*, “The *Ibis* was not a ship like any other; in her inward reality she was a vehicle of transformation travelling through the mists of illusion towards the elusive, ever-receding landfalls that was truth.” Amitav Ghosh fiction demonstrates a concern with migrants, refugees and displaced persons dramatically unite on *Ibis* putting aside their rigid cultures and identities; thus History makes sense of modernity, articulating modern themes of novel i.e. rationalism, enlightenment, liberty, the individual, state, civil society, the democracy and Diaspora for survival. Thus the novel *Sea of Poppies* presents the traumas and helplessness of people in the

wake of colonial upheaval in the nineteenth century when people were forcibly compelled to turn over their fields to opium production. The novel also reveals the damage done by British which reeked upon the Indian economy as well as the society at large. To conclude Amitav Ghosh depicts an era of agricultural scandal; burgeoning western demand for profitable but inedible crops which is causing starvation in the subaltern world till date. His use of multifarious language marvelously captures the multilingual perspectives of the characters. The grand historical sweep, vast panorama of characters, linguistic exuberance and superb story telling style makes *Sea of Poppies* a masterpiece of 21st century English Fiction. Amitav Ghosh is one of the most prominent names in Indian English Writing today.

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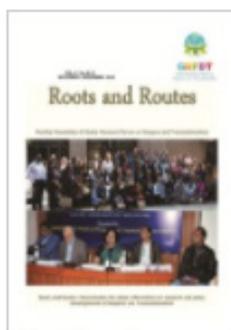
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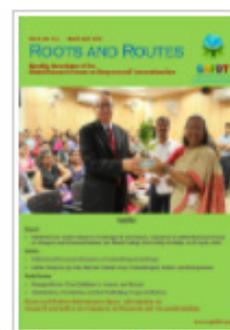
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Roots and Routes is a monthly newsletter of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT). It is inclusive of articles, book reviews and news analysis, which help in disseminating latest information on research and policy development in Diaspora and Transnationalism. The newsletter enjoys readership of academicians, policy experts, diaspora think tanks etc.

The regular columns of the newsletter are :

1. **Article** : consisting of well researched articles of about 3000-4000 words on any aspect of diaspora, migration and transnationalism.
2. **Short commentaries** : consisting of short write ups of about 1500-2000 words based on opinion, description or explanation of any event or situation related to the above mentioned themes.
3. **News analysis** : consisting of analyzing current news in about 1000-1500 words
4. **Book reviews** : 1000-1500 words.

We are pleased to invite your contributions to the above mentioned sections. Please send your contributions to the editors of the newsletter at editor@grfdt.com

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Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is a consortium of researchers and policy makers drawn from national and international universities, institutes and organizations. GRFDT is presently based in India and is shaping as the largest such group focusing specifically on the issues related to diaspora and transnationalism.

The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from academics, practitioners and policy makers in a broad range of areas such as migration policies, transnational linkages of development, human rights, culture, gender to mention a few. In the changing global environment of academic research and policy making, the role of GRFDT will be of immense help to the various stakeholders. Many developing countries cannot afford to miss the opportunity to harness the knowledge revolution of the present era. The engagement of diaspora with various platform need to be reassessed in the present context to engage them in the best possible manner for the development human societies by providing policy in-put at the national and global context.