

# **Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora**



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## Center for the Study of Indian Diaspora

The University of Hyderabad organized an International Conference on the Indian Diaspora in November 1994 with the view to draw the attention of the academicians and policy makers to the significant presence of Indian Diaspora in the newly emerging global order. The Conference, jointly sponsored by the University Grants Commission and Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, was inaugurated by the then UGC Chairman, Professor G.Ram Reddy and was chaired by Dr. Abid Hussain, Vice-Chairman, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and the former Indian Ambassador to the US. The Conference emphasized the long felt need of a Centre for study of Indian Diaspora, as a coordinating body in India and requested the University Grants Commission to set up the Centre.

The Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora was established under the Area Studies Programme of the University Grants Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, in 1996 to carry out **interdisciplinary** studies on overseas Indians, who today constitute nearly 20 million, spread over seventy countries. Although they form a strategic resource in intellectual, economic and cultural spheres besides being goodwill ambassadors of India in the land of their adoption, they have in many cases lost contact with their mother country. The Centre envisages research on the historical context of the Indian Diaspora during the colonial and post-colonial phases, civilizational heritage of Diasporic communities, continuities and transformation in culture, economy and political life, besides promoting communication and linkages between India and the Indian Diaspora. The Centre has set for itself a variety of objectives, such as

- To study the process of emigration, settlement and identity formation in host societies;
- To study the ethnicity of Indian Diaspora communities in relation to the changing power structures, under which ethnic identity is an integrating or divisive force;

- To study the linkages between India and the Indian Diaspora, and between Diaspora communities;
- To study Indian Diaspora in relation to the on-going struggles for identity at the national and global level, and in relation to increasing ethnic consciousness in India;
- To study the comparative writings on the Indian Diaspora by the Indian writers, Diasporic Indian writers and non-Indian writers;
- To study the contributions of the Indian Diaspora to the scientific, technological, administrative and industrial development in host societies;

The Centre has a data bank on the Indian Diaspora both in terms of books, research reports, newspapers clippings, and audio and video collections. The Centre has published 6 Occasional Papers and maintains the WebPages <http://www.uohyd.ernet.in> under 'Indian Diaspora'.

A brief note on the academic program, research activities, seminars/ workshops, visiting fellowships, lecture series and collaborative project, is provided below:

***M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. Program:*** The Centre offers an interdisciplinary course at the M.A. level on Indian Diaspora and more than 90 students have opted for this optional course during 1997-2004. The course is also being offered at the M.Phil. level.

Five Students have been awarded the M.Phil. degree for their dissertation on "Telugu Diaspora in the United States", "Mauritius Ka Hindi Katha Sahitya: Lal Paseena Ke Sandarbh Mein", "Ethnic Entrepreneurship among Tibetan Diaspora in India: The case of LadakhBuddha Vihar, Delhi", "From Diaspora to Transnational Networks: A Comparative Study of Punjabi, Gujarati and Telugu Diasporas" and "Indian Women Writers in North America".

Seven Students are currently working for their Ph.D. Degree

- Continuing Links between India and Indian Diaspora: A Study of Returnee Doctors in Corporate Hospitals”, Sadananda Sahoo, Department of Sociology, Supervisor: Prof. C.S. Bhat.
- New Social Movements, Diaspora and Transnational Networks: Case Study of Sathya Sai Baba Movement, Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, Department of Sociology, Supervisor: Prof. C.S. Bhat
- Telugu Diaspora: Identity Formation and Retention, T.L.S. Bhaskar, Department of Sociology, Supervisor: Prof. C.S. Bhat.
- Antar Rastriya Sthar Par Hindi Ki Sthitiyan Ebam Samasyayen (Mauritius Ke Visesh Sandarva Main), Prem Chandra, Department of Hindi, Supervisor: Prof. Subhas Chandra Kumar.
- Internalization of Ethnic Indian Business Firms from South East Asia, Harish Srivatsava, Department of Sociology, Supervisor: Prof. C.S. Bhat
- Study on Ved Mehta (Indian born American Writer), K. Hemachandran, Department of English, Supervisor: Prof. K. Narayan Chandran.
- Literature of the Indian Diaspora: A Selected Study (with specific reference to countries such as Malaysia, Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana and the Caribbean), Panchanan Dalai, Department of English, Supervisor: Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty.

➔ The Centre offers Junior Research Fellowships (JRFs) to two research scholars pursuing doctoral studies.

➔ One of the Ph.D. scholars of Indian Diaspora course has secured the I.C.S.S.R. fellowship earmarked for Diaspora studies during 1998-2002.

**Research Projects:** Realizing the paucity of information available on the Indian Diaspora from a holistic perspective, the Center has initiated the following projects:

***A Bibliography of Indian Diaspora:*** The first edition of ‘The Bibliography of Indian Diaspora’ was compiled in July 1997. It has about 1200 entries. The second edition comprising of nearly 3,000 entries has already been compiled and is accessible to scholars in the computer database of the Center. Center proposes to make it globally accessible through Internet by December 2000.

***International Encyclopedia of Indian Diaspora:*** Compilation of any encyclopedia is not only enormous in magnitude but requires huge financial back up. As a preliminary step, a proposal on the International Encyclopedia of Indian Diaspora has been prepared and a

National Advisory Committee has been formed to finalize the academic agenda. The Center has planned to approach ICSSR, ICCR, ICHR and other agencies for funding. The members of the National Advisory Committee are: Prof. R.K.Jain (JNU), Prof. S.L.Sharma (Chandigarh), Prof. M.A.Kalam (Madras), Prof. N.Jayaram (Bangalore), Prof.C.S.Bhat (Hyderabad) and Dr.K.Laxmi Narayan (Hyderabad), Convenor.

***Seminars/ Workshops:*** The Centre organized a National Workshop on ‘The Study of Indian Diaspora: Conceptual and Methodological Issues’ during 12-13 September 1997 and a Festival of Films on Indian Diaspora during 17th- 19<sup>th</sup> January 2000. The Center has established contacts with Diaspora scholars and has a mailing list of over 200 members covering almost all diaspora countries. Several of them have responded by gifting the center their publications.

The Centre organized a National Workshop on “***India and Indian Diaspora: Linkages and Expectations***”, sponsored by **Ministry of External Affairs**, September 8-9, 2001. The conference had the benefit of the participation of persons working in different fields of specialization such as science and technology, health care, culture, diplomacy and the members of the **High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora** besides the scholars working on Indian Diaspora.

The High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora was appointed by the Ministry of External Affairs in September 2000, with the approval of the Prime Minister to recommend a broad and flexible policy framework after reviewing the status, needs and role of People of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). The Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Dr. L.M. Singhvi, Member of Parliament and former High Commissioner of India to U.K. Members included Shri R. L. Bhatia, Member of Parliament and former Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri J. R. Hiremath, Indian Foreign Service (Retd.), and Shri Baleshwar Agarwal, Secretary General of the Antar Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad. Shri J.C. Sharma, Secretary (NRI & PV) in the Ministry of External Affairs, was the Member Secretary. The Committee was expected to look at the role of PIOs and NRIs in India, the rights and facilities extended

to them, and also to examine the conditions of their existence including their rights discrimination in the countries of their residence.

The Committee has submitted its report to the Prime Minister in January 2002 recommending measures to resolve the problems faced by NRIs and the PIOs, and to evolve country-specific plans for forging a mutually beneficial relationship and for facilitating their interaction and participation in India's economic development (see the detail report of the HLC at < [www.indiandiaspora.nic.in](http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in) >).

**Visiting Fellowships:** The Center offers two to three Visiting Fellows each year to carry out specific research or to finalize their Reports/ Monographs at the Center for a period ranging between three and six months. The Center will provide travel support within India and hospitality at the University of Hyderabad. Scholars from South Africa, The Netherlands, Mauritius, Trinidad & Tobago, and United States have visited the Centre under this fellowship scheme.

- Dr. Sheila Rampersad, The Centre for Caribbean Studies, University of Warwick, spent a month at the Centre in September 1997 and presented a paper on “Jahaaji Behen? Feminist Literary Theory and the Indian Presence in the Caribbean” (Occasional Paper-2)
- Dr. Prema Kurien, Department of Sociology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, spent a week at the Centre during the third week of July 1997.
- Prof. Mohan K Gautam spent a week in January 1998 at the Centre.
- Prof. Keneth Vidia Parmasad, University of West Indies spent a week in January 1998 at the Centre.
- Ms. Saijal Gokool, Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa visited the Center for a period of 20 days during 15<sup>th</sup> October- 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1999.
- Prof. Uttam Bissoondoyal, Director, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius visited the Center during 27<sup>th</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup> November 1999.
- Prof. Mohan K.Gautam, University of Leiden, The Netherlands, visited the Center during 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> January 2000.
- Dr. Jagat K.Motwani, Secretary General, Global Organization of the People of Indian Origin, New York during 19<sup>th</sup> January - 10<sup>th</sup> February 2000.
- Prof. Meena Alexander, Fulbright Professor of English, Spend two days at the Centre and delivered one lecture on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002.

- Dr. Gopa Kumar, Assistant Director (NGO Services), CAF India, New Delhi delivered one lecture on "Indian Diaspora and Giving Patterns of Indians in USA" on November 2002
- Dr. Mohammed Alam, Professor of Political Science, Miyazaki International College, Japan delivered one lecture on "Between Melting Pot and Salad Bowl: Asian Indians in USA" on 30th January 2003
- Dr. Martina Ghose Schellhorn, Full Professor of the New English Literatures and Cultures, Saarland University, Germany spent a week at the Centre and delivered two lectures on "Cultural Studies Perspectives on Diasporian Identity", and "The Question of Center and Periphery in Post-colonial Context" on February 2003
- Prof. David Dabydeen, Professor, Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies and Centre for Caribbean Studies, University of Warwick, UK spent five days at the Centre and delivered one lecture cum documentary film on "By Any Other Name: Indentured Labour in Guyana, Fiji and South Africa" on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2003
- Mr. Suresh Pillai, Documentary Film Maker spent five days at the Centre and delivered one lecture cum documentary film on "Anatomy of Migration" on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003
- Dr. Radhika Gajjala, Assistant Professor in Interpersonal Communication/Communication Studies, Bowling Green State University, visited the Centre and delivered one lecture on "Studying Online Diaspora: Gender, Nation and Class" on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2003

***The Faculty:*** The Centre **has no faculty of its own.** It has only a honorary Convenor, Dr. Chandrashekhar Bhat, Professor in the Department of Sociology. His specialization includes study of Indian Diaspora and Ethnic Studies. The Centre has 16 faculty members from the Social Sciences, Humanities and Communication disciplines on its Advisory Committee.

***Lecture Series:*** The Centre has initiated a ‘Special Lecture Series’ on the Diaspora by inviting scholars from different parts of the country and the world. In this series the Centre has organized the following lectures:

- Prof. Jomo K. Sundaram, Faculty of Economics and Management Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, delivered a lecture on “Affirmative Action (Reservation Policy) and Ethnic Identity in Malaysia” on January 25, 1996.
- Prof. C. Lakshmana, Former High Commissioner, Trinidad and Tobago, delivered a lecture on “Diaspora: Some Reflections” on 16th October, 1996, under the Special Lecture Series of the University of Hyderabad.
- Prof. F. Baptiste, Professor of History and Dean, Division of African and Asian Studies, University of West Indies, presented a lecture at the CSID on January 1,

1997. The theme of his presentation was “Indian, African and European Interface in Trinidad”.

- Prof. Satendra Nandan, University of Canberra delivered a lecture on “Indians in Fiji” on the 27th of January 1997 which was followed by readings from his prose and poetry.
- Prof. Fred Clothey, Centre for Religious Studies, University of Pittsburg spoke on “Some Reflections on Religion in the Indian Diaspora” on 21st July 1997.
- Dr. Prema Kurien, Department of Sociology, University of California spoke on “Hindu and Muslim Indian American Organizations: Opposing Constructions and Agendas” on 25th July 1997.
- Dr. Kenneth Videa Paramasad, Department of History, University of West Indies, Trinidad spoke on “Conceptualizing Diaspora from the Diaspora” on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1998 and on “Reconstituting the Body: Reformulating Indian Culture in Trinidad” on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1998.
- Prof. Mohan K.Gautam, University of Leiden, The Netherlands lectured on “The Context of Indian Diaspora in Europe: An Appraisal” on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1998 and on “Indians in Surinam” on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1998.
- Ms.Saijal Gokool, Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa spoke on “Indians in South Africa” on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1999 and “Zee T.V. as a Case Study of Indian Diaspora Media” on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1999.
- Prof. Uttam Bissoondoyal, Director, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius, spoke on “Indian Diaspora in Mauritius” on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1999.
- Prof. Mohan K.Gautam, University of Leiden, The Netherlands, gave a series of talks on “The Images of Indian Diaspora in Films” during 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> January 2000.
- Dr. Jagat K.Motwani, Secretary General, Global Organization of the People of Indian Origin, New York delivered two lectures on “Indians in the U.S.A.: A Current Appraisal” and “Organizing the People of Indian Origin” on 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January 2000.
- Prof. Meena Alexander, Fulbright Professor of English, Spend two days at the Centre and delivered one lecture on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002.
- Dr. Gopa Kumar, Assistant Director (NGO Services), CAF India, New Delhi delivered one lecture on "Indian Diaspora and Giving Patterns of Indians in USA" on November 2002
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***International Collaboration:***

- i) The Center is pursuing collaborative research project with the Center for International Global and Regional Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz to carry out research on “Telugu Diaspora and Software Development in Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh”. As a part of this project a team of scholars from the IGRS, University of California visited the Center from 10<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> December to plan the program of research. A formal MOU is expected to be finalized soon.
- ii) A project on ‘Munshi Rahaman Khan’ of Surinam is underway in collaboration with Leiden University.
- iii) The Centre is engaged in collaborative research on ‘Transnational Communities’ with the Department of Geography, University of Rouen, France