

**Ajaya K. Sahoo, ed. *Mapping Indian Diaspora: Contestations and Representations*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2017. 259 pp. ISBN 978-81-316-0897-5.**

The book is a compilation of papers from the International conference on Indian diaspora, organised by the Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora, University of Hyderabad, in November 2014 that brought forth a wide variety of perspectives on the topic. The editor Ajaya K. Sahoo has done a commendable job in putting together the volume, focusing on the themes of contestations and representations of Indian diaspora. The volume has twelve chapters and an introduction by the editor. In the Introduction, Sahoo traces the study of Indian diaspora to the mid-1990s. He broadly categorises three distinct periods of Indian emigration as witnessed in the historical and archival data: *Precolonial* migration during the Chola period (ninth to thirteenth century AD) that existed in the Coromandel Coast and provided a diasporic trading network for the traders from South India; the *Colonial* migration during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which saw emigration in large numbers of Indians in the wake of the European imperialist expansion; and the *Postcolonial* migration which is different from the labour migration in that it saw a trend of voluntary migration of talented professionals and skilled labourers in the post-independence period. In this volume, the range of the essays covers broadly the socio-historical legacies of migration from India and “the trajectories they undergo while resettling in the various diasporic locales” (6).

The first essay by Karen Leonard is an observation on marriage patterns and practices of young South Asian American Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. In this study the author observes that though the religious rituals in marriage remain among these migrants, the practices have become more secular. The young couples coming from different sects, often opting for cross-cultural weddings have adapted to many changes following a cultural translation in the context of living in America and often plan their own weddings. Hence, the rituals remain, often mingle between two communities because they are the signifiers of their ethnic identities and heritage but the couple’s sentimental, romantic choices often override a religiously mandated tradition. These changes reflect the dynamic interaction of immigrants in America’s changing demographic profile and culture. Joanna P. Coelho’s chapter is a case study of Goans settled in Swindon, England. She observes that Goans emigrating from India acquiring Portugese citizenship and giving up the Indian citizenship hold on to their Indian identity. They return to their homeland to observe all the traditional rituals in the event of a marriage, birth or funeral. Subhadeep Kumar’s chapter is a study of the Indian indentured

immigration on the ocean “Being in Kalapani.” The emigrant ship becomes the site of a host of Government policies involving the indentured immigrants who are made to live in unhygienic conditions and become victims of various vector borne diseases, often leading to their deaths. Kishore Kumar Aleti’s chapter looks at the Indians in Malaysia. He observes that there are three dominant ethnic communities in Malaysia – the Malays, Indians and Chinese – and the tension between these ethnic communities is evident through the Government policies that privilege the local Malays or the Bumiputeras (sons of the soil). The Indian emigrants to Malaysia are classified into three streams: Kanganis (indentured plantation workers) during 1840-1910, auxiliaries or recruits in various services after the abolition of slavery, and the merchants or commercial migrants. However, the Malaysian Government’s preferential policies in business, education and religious matters that discriminates the minority groups have left little scope for the non-Malay ethnic communities to prosper in the country.

Sridhar Bhagavatula’s chapter looks at the changes in the concepts of transnationality and migration in the context of globalisation and advancements in communications and linkages. He observes that the social network websites have connected people worldwide through the web and created like-minded communities across borders. The gradual movement of the thought process towards cosmopolitanism has led to the emancipation of the individual from ascribed roles, and identities and theories about world citizenship and global justice have evolved over time. More importantly, cheaper means of conveyance and communication have made movement largely a global phenomenon. Immigration policies of the developed countries have accommodated migration because there is a demand for labour and they get access to the global labour market in the form of migrant workers. Transnationality supports the individual’s freedom to choose on a non-territorial basis, free of any intervention by the sovereign state(s). Anindita Shome’s chapter is an interesting study of Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land* which explores the possibility of the existence of transnational networks in the medieval era. She draws analogies between the present era transnational trends and traces of medieval era linkages amongst India, Egypt and Aden. In his non-fiction Ghosh has observed that there are similarities between the old and new transnational trends through such linkages as trade, language, culture and personal relationships. Rakesh Ranjan looks at a different perspective of diaspora entrepreneurship that has a major impact on the Indian economy. Transnational diasporas promote multidirectional flows and through Governmental policies this entrepreneurship is concentrated in five major sectors: education, health care, infrastructure, IT, and energy and environment. Most of the return diasporas set up new ventures in the home country. He collects and analyses data from various sectors and departments at national and international levels to chart the pattern of diasporic

entrepreneurships in India and concludes that there is an urgent need to change the protectionist mindset in business to a risk-taking and innovative mindset.

Diksha Jha's chapter analyses the Indian diaspora policy regarding the three types of diaspora that are categorised as Persons of Indian Origin (PIO): migrants belonging to the older diaspora who migrated to the African and Caribbean states before independence, the high skilled professionals migrating and residing in the affluent Western countries and recent temporary migrant workers to the Gulf states. While the Indian Government privileges the second category of high skilled professionals, it thinks that the third category of low skilled workers with lesser economic status need to be protected against exploitation. Naturally, the state strategies towards different diasporic sections overseas have a differential impact on their citizenship status. Angshuman Kar's chapter reinstates that the same treatment is not meted out by India to its diaspora in the US or UK and the UAE. He observes that beyond the Government policies, in academia and the literary world, some diasporas are pushed to the margin while others are at the centre. He examines Abdul Ghani Sheikh's story "Two Nations, One State" and argues that there should be a sub-category of partition diaspora for such stories, since partition can make one a diasporan in his own country. Arnab Kumar Sinha's chapter focuses on the Indo-Canadian diasporic writer M.G. Vassanji's novel *The Assassin's Song* trying to interpret the issue of religious fundamentalism and its impact on diasporic Muslims. In his narrative, Vassanji makes an attempt to seriously interrogate the issue of connecting Islam with terror, and taking cue from Vassanji's representation the chapter focuses on the problematics of equating religious fundamentalism with Islam in wake of such events as 9/11 or the Gujrat riots.

Sanjoy Malik's chapter observes how an acclaimed Indian American writer Meena Alexander feels like an "other" in America, the country she has adopted as her "home," despite her strong attachments to the country. After the 9/11 attacks, America considered all non-white immigrants as a threat to its national security and the racial abuses, the feeling of insecurity in the aftermath of the attack, made Meena Alexander prefer to remain ethnically invisible in the mainstream American society. In her post 9/11 writings, she depicts the trauma of the terror attack and these poems provide an attempt to restore order in her diasporic space which has been largely altered by the events. The last chapter of the volume by Neetu Devi is an attempt to look at the problematic question of identity formation in diaspora. She cites the different definitions provided by the critics in the evolution of multiple diasporic identity and observes that a diasporic community represents its distinct identity through religious, linguistic and cultural differences and therefore any research into identity and diaspora must take into account the great variety and heterogeneity of identities at a given point of time. She explores how religious identity becomes an important marker for the community and the conversion of the indenture labourers by the Christian

missionaries curtailed their historicity to a Trishanku (belonging to nowhere) existence. She offers a study of Mootoo and Espinot's novels to point out how a "nowherian" (244) self with multilayered identity becomes a recurrent theme in their writings.

Indian diaspora is a growing community in the contemporary world which has been in the headlines for a number of reasons. The Indian diaspora has acted as a catalyst in the emergence of India as an economic and geo-political power in the world. The relationship of the diasporic Indians to their homeland has grown stronger due to advancement in information and communication technologies. The editor has traced the development of the Indian diaspora and presented a number of papers that address various issues regarding this community. Overall, the book is a collector's item for researchers and scholars of literature, anthropology, sociology, political science and migration studies because of its multi-disciplinary approach to the issue. The chapters are well researched and often provide adequate statistical data to complement the theories and analyses presented in them.

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