

Report on Panel Discussion
“Envisaging Indo-Canadian Studies”



Indo-Canadian Studies Centre, University of Mumbai
29th August, 2020



Content

Introduction

Discussion session

Valedictory Remarks

Conclusion

.

Introduction

In keeping with the mission of striving for excellence in higher education that has been set by the University of Mumbai under the leadership of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor Prof. Suhas Pednekar and Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni, and the constant encouragement by the Hon'ble Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Rajesh Kharat, the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre had organized a panel discussion titled, "Envisaging Indo-Canadian Studies" on August 29, 2020. The primary idea behind this event was to engage scholars from India and Canada and brainstorm possible project ideas, administrative as well as collaborative aims for the academic year 2020-21.



Discussion in Progress: Delegates from India and Canada.

Dr. Sachin Labade, Hon. Coordinator of the ICSC, welcomed the Resource Persons, by laying out the objective for discussion, and thanking Prof. Dr. Nilufer Bharucha, Director and Scientist-Incharge, CoHab IDC and Former Coordinator, ICSC, at the outset for gracing the session. The session was moderated by Hridaya Ajgaonkar, Research Aide, ICSC, University of Mumbai.

The Panelists

The invited Resource Persons included established and young scholars from India and Canada, specializing in Migration, Diaspora, and Indo-Canadian Studies. The panelists included established scholars like Prof. Mala Pandurang, Principal, Dr BMN College of Home Science (Autonomous) and Nominated Ambassador Scientist to India for the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Germany); Dr. Paromita Chakrabarti, Head and Associate Professor, Department of English, H.R. College, Mumbai; Dr. Ruby Rana, who is Senior Advisor to the Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada IRCC and Associate Faculty, School of Communication & Culture, Royal Roads University; and Dr. Yamini Dand Shah, who is on the Advisory Council, Board of Studies (English), Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College, Co-Curator, KGAF Literature 2019. The young scholars invited included Ms. Sai Diwan, PhD Student, University of British Columbia; Ms. Anmol Dutta, PhD Student at the University of Western Ontario, and Ms. Vishakha Uppoor, a student of Master's in Publishing from Simon Fraser University.

Discussion

After Prof. Labade laid out the agenda for the session, Hridaya Ajgaonkar led the session, inviting panelists to share ideas with an aim at mapping contemporary Indo-Canadian academic endeavours and culling new research possibilities. A discussion on the advantages and challenges of transnational research, especially in a post-COVID world where the concepts of 'home', 'belonging', and 'movement' are ever changing was initiated.



Prof. Mala Pandurang initiated the discussion suggesting collaboration beyond the University of Mumbai, and identifying new areas of literature, moving beyond literature and engage topics that address the concerns of transnationalism. Her suggestions included setting up an annual research theme every year, and starting online certificate courses, consisting of a short 30-hour module for instance, that would revolve around Canadian Studies.

Dr. Paromita Chakrabarti suggested collaborations between the new and old stakeholders of the ICSC, and formulating a structure that would be enriching, vibrant as well as dynamic. Her suggestions also included moving beyond literature and urged ICSC to come up with outreach and collaborative plans with other college departments and universities, in India and Canada. She suggested a possible initiation of a scholarly journal fostering Indo-Canadian research and engaging social events that would encourage academic networking.





Dr. Yamini Dand Shah pitched in some interesting ideas about propagating academic research in examining the Indian family structure in Canada. She suggested greater outreach of the ICSC through its Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute relationship. Her ideas also included unbolting greater research scope through expansion of the ICSC library resources. Dr. Dand suggested coming up with a yearly newsletter if the journal idea could possibly be a bit too time-consuming.

Dr. Ruby Rana responded and encouraged Dr. Dand's library expansion initiative. She suggested identifying achievable short-term goals for the ICSC and working towards it. She strongly encouraged academic networking and boosting connections and research through ICSC's previous and current associations.



Ms. Sai Diwan focused on a more student-centred participation. From her experience as the Research Associate to the Centre, she charted out methods of increasing involvement, laying out possibilities like Film Screenings, Book discussions, etc. that would enable student engagement and incentivize participation in ICSC activities. She emphasised on the importance of mentor-mentee relationship and suggested a mentorship programs for aspirants in Indo-Canadian studies.

Ms. Anmol Dutta suggested a project idea that could possibly study the current urgency in Indo-Canadian student migration, focusing on the immigrant experience. Acknowledging Ms. Diwan's suggestions for student engagement, Ms. Dutta as the Research Associate of ICSC, suggested increasing its digital presence. She encouraged the idea of an ICSC journal and also suggested enabling certificate courses on a digital platform that would increase the scope of dissemination and involvement.



Ms. Vishakha Uppoor suggested a project idea that could initiate a conversation on Digital Diasporas, that encircle shifts in identity formation, and “long-distance nationalism”. Owing to her training in Publishing, she suggested a few resourceful ideas that would be useful in journal publishing, introducing e-journals. Weighing on Dr. Dand's suggestion regarding fostering a library, she suggested forming and implementing an e-library which could be more resourceful in the current times.

Prof. Dr. Nilufer Bharucha, Director and Scientist-Incharge, CoHab IDC and Former Coordinator, ICSC, provided a lucid, detailed response to the panelists' suggestions in her address. Her primary suggestion included expanding digital visibility in order to foster better scope and accessibility. She stressed on the importance of not isolating the research conducted under the ICSC to exclusively South Asian or Canadian Studies, but rather promoting Indo-Canadian studies in literature and beyond, acknowledging what the essence of ICSC represents. Addressing past events and associations, Prof. Bharucha particularly acknowledged University of Fraser Valley's invaluable association with the ICSC, suggesting fostering



ICSC's existing connections and engaging newer academic connections in the future for more rewarding prospects in academia. Prof. Bharucha's inputs and advice set the ball rolling and invited another round of fulfilling discussion as the panelists responded and brainstormed more prospective ideas.



Hridaya Ajgaonkar initiated a dialogue between the panelists, and taking up Prof. Bharucha's comments, stressed on the importance of a strong digital presence, including contributions from the Indo-Canadian community for the ICSC social media pages, as well as academic resource-creation on MOODLE.

Conclusion

The Panel discussion was concluded by Dr. Labade, who thanked each of the panelists and weighed in on each of the suggestions made, deciding to work closely on them as the newly appointed Coordinator of the ICSC.

Dr Sachin Labade
Honorary Coordinator

Room No. 49, Ranade Bhavan, University of Mumbai,
Vidyanagari Santacruz (East), Mumbai 400098, India
Tel: 022-26530242 (Ext. 3510), E-mail: coordinator@icsc.mu.ac.in