

Report on the Creative Writing Webinar on 20 March 2021

The CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre (CoHaB IDC) had organised a Creative Writing webinar on 20 March 2021. The event was an international and interdisciplinary one with participants attending from India and the World. Dr. Chandani Lokuge from the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, Mr. Kevin Ireland, Poet and Author from New Zealand, and Professor Rebecca Haque, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, were the creative writers at this webinar.

Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in India (CASII), India, chaired the webinar. Professor Sridhar is also a creative writer and his poems have been published in India and abroad. His plays have been performed over the All India Radio.

The webinar began with Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, CoHaB IDC, University of Mumbai, welcoming the speakers and the audience. She spoke briefly about the several webcasts CoHaB IDC had organised independently as well as its collaborative events with the Mumbai University's Department of Law and the WW University of Muenster, Germany, Mumbai University's long standing academic partner, during the lockdown. Professor Bharucha then requested Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran to chair the session and introduce the creative writers.



Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, CoHaB IDC, University of Mumbai

Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran began by thanking the organisers and said he was honoured to chair the webinar with three such illustrious creative writers.



Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, CASII, India

Professor Sridhar then introduced the first speaker of the day, Dr. Chandani Lokuge. Dr. Lokuge's talk was entitled 'The Hyphenated Creative Space in the Diaspora'. She spoke about her own experiences as a diasporic creative writer. She said writers like her are inspired to experiment with new combinations and permutation in order to seek alternative truths.

Dr. Lokuge read from her novels and spoke about borders, culture, identity, hybridity, belonging and (dis)belonging. By reading excerpts from her works, she gave a glimpse into her own diasporic creative life. Her presentation analysed the psychological space that she occupies as a Sri Lankan-Australian writer and the themes she works on.



Dr. Chandani Lokuge, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

At the end of the presentation, Professor Sridhar thanked Dr. Lokuge and requested the members of the audience to ask questions and/or comment on the talk. All the participants appreciated the presentation, following which Professor Sridhar succinctly summarised her talk before moving on to the next speaker, Mr. Kevin Ireland.

Professor Sridhar introduced Mr. Kevin Ireland to the audience and requested him to start his presentation. Mr. Ireland spoke on 'Crossing the Borders between Sojourn and Diaspora'. Mr. Ireland spoke about how a 'sojourner' experience goes hand in hand with diasporic experiences which could be due to war, disruption, economical, and/or various types of disruptions. According to him, this 'sojourner' experience is shared by many. It also involves dislocation, alienations and personal disruptions of a more individual nature, but it shares some of the same motivations, ambitions and experiences of those caught up in a diaspora.



Mr. Kevin Ireland, Poet and Author, New Zealand

Through the reading of his poems, Mr. Ireland examined these similarities and differences. The presentation was well received by the audience.

The presentation ended with a discussion, followed by Professor Sridhar's remarks. Professor Sridhar then introduced the last speaker of the day, Professor Rebecca Haque, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She spoke on 'GO WITH THE FLOW: Creativity in the River of Life'. Her presentation focussed on her birth and life in the East Bengal delta. As a child, she had moved between continents that led to varied diasporic/sojourner experiences. These experiences helped her evolution as a poet and writer. Her experiences with other cultures and ethnic races from different geographical regions and countries continue to feed her passion to write. Throughout the presentation, Professor Haque spoke of how her multinational experiences shaped her thoughts and emotions and the special connect that she has to her homeland, Bangladesh. She gave several examples from her life to illustrate her views.



Professor Rebecca Haque, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Everyone in the audience appreciated Professor Haque's presentation. Professor Sridhar too gave his remarks and opened the floor for discussion on the three presentations.

Professor Bharucha then wrapped up the webinar and thanked the speakers. She then requested Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, CoHaB IDC, to offer the formal vote of thanks.

Ms. Risbud then gave the formal vote of thanks and concluded the webinar.



Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, CoHaB IDC, University of Mumbai

You may view the entire webcast on the link given below:

[Creative Writing Webinar](#)

Date: 20 March 2021

Place: Mumbai

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha
Director, CoHaB IDC