



**Indian Diaspora Centre  
&  
DEPARTMENT OF LAW**

**University of Mumbai**



**Report on the Third Lecture in the  
Interdisciplinary, international Law, Literature and Diaspora Lecture Series  
THE INDIAN NAVY AND THE DIASPORA  
by Commodore Srikant B. Kesnur on 27 October 2020**

A webcast of the lecture on The Indian Navy and the Diaspora by Commodore Srikant B. Kesnur was organized by the CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre, University of Mumbai, in collaboration with the Mumbai University's Department of Law and the Law and Literature research project of the WW University of Muenster, Germany, on 27 October 2020.

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, Constructions of Home and Belonging Indian Diaspora Centre (CoHaB IDC), welcomed the chief guest Vice Chancellor of the University of Mumbai, Professor Suhas Pednekar, the speaker Commodore Srikant B. Kesnur (Director, Maritime Warfare Centre, Indian Navy, Mumbai), the chair Professor Anuradha Majumdar (Dean of Science and Technology, University of Mumbai) and all the participants. She expressed her gratitude of Vice Chancellor Suhas Pednekar's support of CoHaB IDC's efforts at organising international and interdisciplinary events. She was specifically appreciative of the fact that while belonging to the discipline of Science, he has always encouraged the Humanities. She mentioned how the Covid-19 pandemic has given all the opportunity to be truly interdisciplinary and the lecture by Cmde Kesnur is an example of the same. She also spoke about how the relationship between the Indian Ocean and the diaspora is ancient and that the Indian diaspora has made significant contributions in the field of science and technology in their new homelands. She then introduced the Vice Chancellor, who has also been appointed the Vice Chancellor of the Homi Bhabha University, Mumbai and invited him to give his opening remarks.



Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, CoHaB IDC

The Vice Chancellor began his address by mentioning how the Covid-19 pandemic has ensured the importance of co-existence, collaborations, resilience and adaptability. He spoke of how we need to adapt ourselves to face all challenges and explore various avenues. He spoke of the Mumbai University's association with the Naval War College and how educationists need to understand the great potential of the yet unexplored oceans.



Professor Suhas Pednekar, Vice Chancellor, University of Mumbai

The Vice Chancellor took the opportunity to announce the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Marine and Maritime Studies under the auspices of the Mumbai University and the chairperson Professor Anuradha Majumdar as the first Director of the said centre. Professor Pednekar concluded his address by speaking about the need to create and promote an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship in interdisciplinary areas in the future.

Professor Bharucha thanked the Vice Chancellor and invited Professor Anuradha Majumdar to chair the session and introduce Cmde Srikant Kesnur. After introducing the speaker, Professor Majumdar also spoke briefly about the topic and this set the tone for the lecture. She then requested Cmde Kesnur to begin his lecture.

Cmde Srikant Kesnur began his presentation with a brief historical overview of India's maritime heritage. He spoke of how the country had a glorious maritime history that goes back to Harappan civilization and continued until 13<sup>th</sup> CE, after which maritime interests were unfortunately neglected. He showed data that demonstrated how maritime strength and national prosperity and security are linked.



Commodore Srikant Kesnur, Director, Maritime Warfare Centre, Indian Navy, Mumbai

Oceans have an incredible capacity to carry cargo. In fact they carry 95% of world's trade by volume in which the diaspora played a significant role.

Comde Kesnur spoke of how culture was dispersed to distant lands via the seas. He gave the example of the Indonesian Armed Forces whose motto has Indian cultural roots. He also talked about the installation of a *Samudramanthan* statue at the Suvarnabhumi international airport, Bangkok. He also spoke about his own experiences of interacting with the diasporics when posted abroad, especially in East Africa where he witnessed the different aspects of diaspora.

The Commodore went on to talk about the Indian Navy and diplomacy wherein he mentioned how navies build bridges in terms of diplomacy. The Indian Navy provides substantial strength to India's international engagement activities. The navy too has initiated several multi-lateral forums which has nations with Indian diasporic presence as its members. The objective of maritime diplomacy is to strengthen political relations and goodwill.

Between the 1940s and 1960s, Indian ships made significant overseas visits. It was the time when the country was carving its path in a postcolonial world and connecting with the diaspora. At the same time, it was making subtle political points.

As part of maritime diplomacy the Indian Navy is involved in activities such as training people from all over the world, refit/build ships or provide material assistance, patrolling the seas and engage the diaspora in different ways. Comde Kesnur gave the example of when ships designed and made in India are on a mission to different countries, it causes immense pride in the diasporics in that country who throng in thousands to touch and feel them.

While the navy helps in strengthening the bond with other countries, it also provides counter piracy protection to several countries such as Seychelles, Mauritius and Maldives, thus extending goodwill. India is also a member of all global forums to tackle piracy.

The Indian Navy is one of the largest and most powerful navies in the world and has a swift response to emergencies, such as the Samudra Setu/Mission Sagar operation during the Covid-19 pandemic wherein the navy evacuated Indians and delivered food and medicines. In the speaker's words, it is a navy that dares and cares in equal measure.

The Indian Navy's objectives are aligned with the government's foreign policy objectives but the navy too realises the importance of overseas Indians, 90% of whom live in coastal states. The navy is interested in the well-being of overseas Indians as they are also spread across regions with instabilities. The Indian Navy provides a palpable, physical connect to the diaspora, reassurance. In the earlier decades, the navy was also the symbol of sovereign India when the new homelands of the diasporics were yet to get independence.

When the ships go to different countries, they also provide a meeting space for different entities and showcase India's capabilities. The crew of these ships are also the role models of behaviour when out on a mission.

Comde Kesnur concluded his presentation by reading the first-hand experiences of the Indian sailors with the diasporics. At the end, he showed a chart of the Tanga region that was presented to the Prime Minister of Tanzania, by Admiral Lanba.

The Commodore then answered questions by participants in the Q & A session that followed. All the participants appreciated his lecture.

Professor Anuradha Majumdar then gave her remarks before inviting the valedictory speaker, Professor Klaus Stierstorfer.



Professor Anuradha Majumdar, Dean, Science and Technology, University of Mumbai

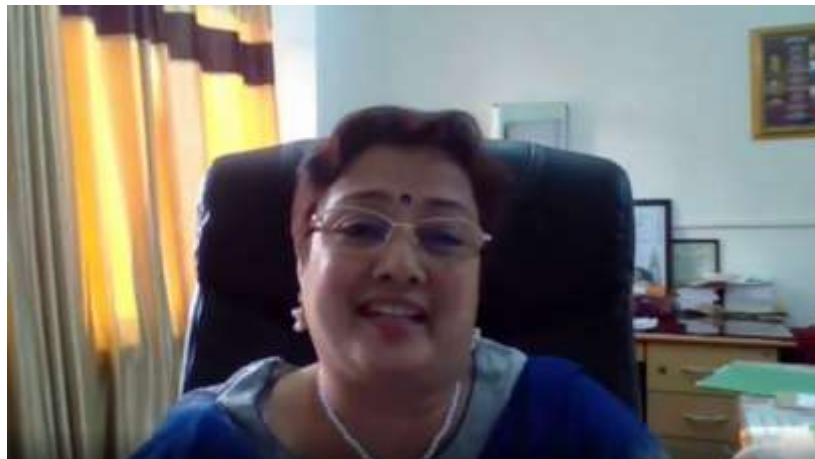
Professor Stierstorfer the Chair of British Studies, Vice Dean of Philology and Spokesperson of the "Collaborative Law and Literature Research Centre", SFB 1385, University of Muenster, Germany, also the joint organiser of this lecture series, gave his address. He thanked Comde

Kesnur for the vivid and first-hand presentation of an aspect of Diaspora Studies which was not thought of earlier. He mentioned how ships themselves are an entity, rather a culture, of their own. He gave an example of his colleague who is doing research on the libraries within the ships to know the kind of books that sailors read or refer to. He once again thanked the Commodore for doing the presentation and ended on a note to stay in touch with him for any possible collaboration in the future.



Professor Klaus Stierstorfer, Chair of British Studies, WW University of Muenster

The other Joint organiser of the lecture series Professor Rajeshri Varhadi, Head, Department of Law, University of Mumbai, thanked the Vice Chancellor for being supportive of the interdisciplinary lectures. She appreciated Cmde Kesnur's lecture and was also thankful to him for offering to deliver a lecture for the Law Department on Maritime laws. She gratefully acknowledged Professor Bharucha and Professor Stierstorfer's efforts in envisioning this unique interdisciplinary series on Law, Literature and Diaspora and organizing lectures by eminent speakers renowned in their respective fields.



Professor Rajeshri Varhadi, Head, Department of Law, University of Mumbai

The lecture ended with the vote of thanks by Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, CoHaB IDC, University of Mumbai.



Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, CoHaB IDC

The lecture was well attended by participants from India and abroad and several serving and retired high ranking officers from the navy, army and police.

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

[Law, Literature and Diaspora Lecture Series: The Indian Navy and the Diaspora by Commodore Srikant Kesnur on 27 October 2020](#)

**Date: 27 October 2020**

**Place: Mumbai**

**Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha**

**Director, CoHaB IDC**

