



Indian Diaspora Centre

University of Mumbai



Report on the Online Book Launch of ***NEW DIRECTIONS IN DIASPORA STUDIES: REVISITING THE PAST, REVIEWING THE PRESENT AND LOOKING AT THE FUTURE***

CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre (CoHaB IDC), University of Mumbai, had organized an online book launch of ***New Directions in Diaspora Studies: Revisiting the Past, Reviewing the Present and Looking at the Future***, Volume II in CoHaB IDC's Diaspora Studies Series on 16 June 2021. The Honourable Vice Chancellor of the University of Mumbai, Professor Suhas Pednekar, was the Chief Guest and launched the book in the presence of an audience present from all over the World. Professor Janet Wilson, Emerita Professor of English and Postcolonial Studies, University of Northampton, UK, was the Guest of Honour at this event. Although Professor Wilson could not join us live, she recorded a message for the launch which was played during the event.



Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, CoHaB IDC, began the event by welcoming the Honourable Vice Chancellor and the participants. She welcomed the Advisory Board members of the Centre who were present and Professor Klaus Stierstorfer and Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, the two co-editors of the series. She also thanked the Contributors for their patience in waiting for the book to be launched. She thanked the Vice Chancellor for accepting the Centre's invitation to launch the book and for his continued support to the Centre and its online activities throughout the pandemic.



Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, CoHaB IDC

Professor Bharucha then gave a brief introduction to the book - ***New Directions in Diaspora Studies: Revisiting the Past, Reviewing the Present and Looking at the Future***. She mentioned how the meaning of the term 'Diaspora' had undergone changes over the past several decades. This volume explores what lies next. The volume examines both the interdisciplinary and an alternative framework, both the historical phenomena of 'diaspora' and contemporary alternative approaches to diaspora studies. She mentioned how one needs to accommodate the new rootlessness in the diasporic experience in the current global refugee crises and political moves. The volume also deals with the internal diaspora, especially in the Indian context. Thus, this book aims at revisiting past concepts, reassessing current ideas and resisting boundaries.

This book is a result of the proceedings of the conference, "The Past, Present and Post 'Diaspora': New Directions in Diaspora Studies". However, the essays are not limited to the participants of the conference but also include contributors who are well known in the field of Diaspora Studies. This book was launched as an ebook owing to the current Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. The contributors to this volume are from India and around the World, representing the Centre's international and interdisciplinary network it has built over the last several years. Professor Bharucha specifically mentioned the scholars from the original CoHaB who had contributed to this volume. She mentioned Professor Stierstorfer, who was the overall Coordinator of the EU funded CoHaB (Phase I), has been a long-standing partner of the University of Mumbai. He is now a key Advisory Board Member of the CoHaB IDC as well as the co-editor of the Diaspora Studies Series. The book also consciously includes young researchers along with established scholars in the field.

Professor Bharucha then introduced the Honourable Vice Chancellor and requested him to give his remarks. The Honourable Vice Chancellor said he was happy to be part of the book launch. He began by talking about how this interdisciplinary series focusses on cutting edge research produced in the context of the Diaspora at the intersections of literature, cinema, sociology, history, economics and politics. He mentioned how the Indian Diaspora in different parts of the world contributes to the political, economic, industrial, social and cultural scenes of its adopted homelands. Professor Pednekar spoke about how in this millennium we have to deal with the issue of the displacement

of thousands of men, women and children through wars and ethnic cleansing. This refugee diaspora is also important and the Diaspora Studies Series has taken it into account. He added that this volume is not just interdisciplinary but also truly national and international as the contributors come from different parts of India, from Germany, the U.K., U.S.A., Canada, Romania, Italy and Mauritius.



Professor Suhas Pednekar, Vice Chancellor, University of Mumbai

The University of Mumbai from 2012 onwards has been at the forefront of research in diaspora studies and has been part of the European Union's Marie Curie Initial Training Network, along with its long-term academic partner the University of Muenster in Germany and from 2015, CoHaB IDC (Phase II) has contributed to the study of the Indian Diaspora through publications such as this one launched today, conferences, workshops and lecture series. The University of Mumbai supports all such interdisciplinary and global approaches towards research and is happy as always to cooperate with the further activities of the Centre. Professor Pednekar concluded by wishing the CoHaB IDC, its publications, academic endeavours in the area of diaspora studies, and its national and international collaborators all success.

Professor Bharucha thanked the Vice Chancellor for launching the book and introduced Professor Janet Wilson, followed by a presentation by her. Professor Wilson began by saying how honoured she felt to be able to speak about the book at its launch. She applauded the fine work that CoHaB IDC was doing since its founding as CoHaB in 2015, in promoting diaspora studies among graduate and postgraduate students as well as hosting visiting scholars and expanding its international network.



Professor Janet Wilson, Emerita Professor, University of Northampton, UK

While Professor Wilson too spoke about the contribution of the three scholars from the original CoHaB and also acknowledged the intellectual contribution of CoHaB's advisors, Khachig Tololoyan, Avtar Brah and Ceri Peach, all of them leading figures in this field. She further added how the book gives a glimpse of the different ways in which the field of diaspora is evolving. The essays in this book are diverse, collectively illustrating various trajectories of diaspora studies according to the volume's threefold divisions into: 1. *New Directions* 2. *Revisiting the Past*, 3. *Reviewing the Present*, that guide readers through an examination of the growth of diaspora studies and questions about the discipline's likely future directions.

Professor Wilson added that in engaging with developments in the field and pointing to new directions, the volume begins with core components of the discipline that allow for multiple articulations and representations of mobility, and make 'diaspora' exceed the connotative range of cognate terms like migration or expatriate.

She further went on to elaborate on the different issues discussed in the volume that the contributors have tackled. Through their multiple interdisciplinary frameworks, Professor Wilson spoke of how the 25 essays offer rich and varied representations of diaspora subjects. She then discussed the future of diaspora studies. According to her, to assess the potential future direction of diaspora studies requires taking the pulse of the discipline. The essays in this volume thus discuss not only the evolutionary trajectories by which diaspora studies has reached its present prominence in global modernity but also confirms that the disciplinary process of expansion continues precisely because mobility is a condition of our time; and this augurs well for future research and for more dialogues in diaspora studies.

Professor Wilson then concluded by congratulating all the editors and contributors and expressed regret at not being able to participate live.

Professor Bharucha then invited Professor Klaus Stierstorfer to offer his remarks on the book. Professor Stierstorfer is Chair of British Studies, Vice Dean of Philology and Spokesperson of the "Collaborative Law and Literature Research Centre", SFB 1385, University of Muenster, Germany. Professor Stierstorfer began by talking about the long standing collaboration his university has with the Mumbai University. He then spoke about yet another long term collaboration on diaspora studies. He expressed happiness at the launch of the book which is a milestone to showcase that the work has diversified and not stopped in spite of the many hurdles the world is facing at current times.



Professor Klaus Stierstorfer, University of Muenster, Germany

Professor Stierstorfer in fact said that this book is a cornerstone in this area of study and expressed his happiness at sharing it with his friends and colleagues in Mumbai and those who were at the beginning of the journey. He concluded by saying that he was happy to be a part of the launch.

Professor Bharucha then invited Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in India (CASII), and co-editor of the Diaspora Studies Series to offer his comments. Professor Sridhar began by talking about how he has gained a lot more from the book and its contributors as an academic. He expressed his happiness of being one of the editors of this series. As Director of CASII, he was pleased as CASII has been associated with CoHaB since 2013 as an Associate Member and taking care of in-house programmes in the areas of adoption, ecology and environmental research as well as film studies. He concluded by wishing the best for CoHaB IDC.



Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, CASII

Professor Bharucha then requested the technical team to offer their comments at the launch. Mr. Allan Oscar Ritchie, independent Communication Consultant, formatted and made it Amazon ready to be launched. Allan began by thanking Professor Bharucha and congratulated everyone for getting the book published. He spoke about how he uploaded the book on Amazon and used key words to increase the book's visibility. He concluded by thanking the organisers again.



Mr. Allan Oscar Ritchie

Professor Bharucha then invited Ms. Sasikala Rajeswaran to offer her comments and introduced her. While Ms. Sasikala was not able to be present in person as she had a

medical emergency, her comments were read out by Ms. Kirti Risbud. Sasikala is a journalist by profession and an architecture and interior design enthusiast. She has her own website *Sawdust* about her work. She commented on how she chose the colours of the book cover for this volume. She mentioned how the colours were earthy and soft as compared to the bright ones used for Volume I. Her comments concluded by talking about the different ways in which a book shapes our life.

Professor Nilufer Bharucha then introduced and requested Ms. Kirti Risbud to offer her comments. Ms. Risbud thanked Professor Bharucha and spoke of how it was a learning experience for her to edit this volume.



Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, CoHaB IDC

The platform was then open to all for discussion which was then followed by a vote of thanks.

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

[Online Book Launch of CoHaB IDC's *New Directions in Diaspora Studies: Revisiting the Past, Reviewing the Present and Looking at the Future*](#)

Date: 16 June 2021

Place: Mumbai

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha

Director, CoHaB IDC