



CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference
on
Kala pani Crossings #2:
Diaspora and Gender across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans
FEBRUARY 26-27, 2020

Hosted by
Department of English & Department of French
Pondicherry University, India
in partnership with
EMMA, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, France

This symposium follows up on the seminar 'Kala pani Crossings: India in Conversation' that was held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla (September 23-25, 2019). Kala pani Crossings #1 had meant to throw more light on the 19th century migrations from India to Fiji, Mauritius, the Caribbean and Africa, and to revisit the history from the perspective of India. Over one million Indians were transported between 1834 and 1917 to sugar colonies under the system of indentured labour in order to meet the demand for cheap, unskilled labour after the abolition of Atlantic slavery in 1833. Yet, it is a chapter that has been excluded from Indian history.

Kala pani Crossings #2 intends to focus more precisely on the gender dimension in the migrations and in the historiography. Initially, the recruits were predominantly male with very few females. Historians such as Brij V Lal (1984) and Gillion (1962) have recorded an unequal sex ration (3.3:1 for Mauritius and 2.2: 1 for Natal) that lead to numerous problems as the indentured labourers settled in the colonies. As a result, eventually, efforts were made to enforce more recruitment of women in the ratio of around 40 women per 100 men (Tinker 1974). Women, therefore, came to constitute an important section of the migrant indentured population that was transported from India. Colonial history as well as migrant discourse, however, tend to omit references to women migrants and their experiences. Women have been homogenised within the largely androcentric master narratives of their male counterparts. It is the feminist scholarship and its specific interest in diaspora and migration studies that has excavated the feminine narrative and emphasised the fact that the gendered dimension of migrant experience cannot be overlooked or downplayed.

This symposium is particularly interested in exploring the intersections of diaspora and gender within the diasporic and Indian imagination in order to investigate the ways in which race, class, caste, gender, and sexuality intersect with concepts of home, belonging, displacement and the reinvention of self.

Its aim is to comprehend

- if diasporic locations/positions marginalise women by alienating them from their home, or empower them as they emerge from nationalistic narrative to a transnational experience, allowing women to problematize/rethink home-host dichotomy;
- the possibilities of negotiation or resistance, and how those possibilities are determined by race, class, caste, or ethnicity;
- how the traditional standards of Indianness and gender relations were reshaped through the diasporic experience, as well as the impact such a reshaping had, if any, on the subcontinent;
- what can be gained in India by theorizing diaspora through a feminist framework;
- what it can mean for contemporary Indian women to look at the dynamics of racial and cultural formations in the diaspora, and to learn about the alternatives to the Indian norms of gender, patriarchy, class and caste;
- what kind of connections, dialogues, and solidarities can be conceived today between the Indian women at home and their diasporic counterparts.

- ✚ Interested scholars are invited to submit a 300-word proposal and a short bio (150 words) for a 20-minute paper to the co-conveners of the symposium by December 15, 2019:

kalapanipondicherry@gmail.com

Notification of acceptance will be given by December 30, 2019.

- ✚ CONFERENCE ORGANISERS:

- Prof. H. Kalpana Rao, Department of English, Pondicherry University, India
- Dr Ritu Tyagi, Department of French, Pondicherry University, India
- Dr Judith Misrahi-Barak, English, EMMA, University Paul Valery Montpellier 3, France

- ✚ Travel and Accommodation:

Speakers will have to find their own funding for travel. Accommodation will be arranged for outstation paper presenters, if intimated in advance.

Working lunch and local hospitality will be provided.

- ✚ **Registration Charges:**

Faculty: 1500 INR
Scholars: 1000 INR