

**International conference on “India, Asia and Australia: Oceanic Encounters and Exchanges” at BHU, Varanasi 29-31 January, 2020) in collaboration with Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi**

Concept Note:

Strabo (63 BC – c. AD 24) the Greek Geographer, historian, and philosopher long asserted that the ocean is not merely an empty space but a potential site for social, cultural and economic transactions. Much later Fernand Braudel's (1902 – 1985) work *The Mediterranean* aptly called the sea a "vast, complex expanse" within which the humans' function. He further examined the complex contours of the ocean and the land. During the long *longue durée* of explorations, colonization, and settlements from the 16th century Oceania continues to assert itself as “global economy” with enabling cultural modalities of language, religion, trade practices, and shared knowledge. Transnational identities established through trading relations produced specific identities. But, in the hub of the encounters and exchanges in economically and culturally complex ways often led to disputes, confrontation, and disagreements but also resulted in dialogue, mutual effect and eventually mutual transformation. Within this framework, this multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary conference is looking at contemporary issues in Oceania.

An array of disciplinary and area studies works in politics, history anthropology and international relations , history, literature, archaeology, defense studies and genetics among other disciplines continue to play influential roles in developing understanding of Indian Ocean parts for all periods. All this and many more concerns compel us to debate as to how, why and what of Indian Oceanic exchanges in India, Asia and Australia draw us together and define Indian oceanic region. It is time to redefine the phenomenon of globalisation and to question globalisation as a concept of and what residues tangible or otherwise bring out the cohesiveness among the nations that have or will impact on the ocean. The conference proposes to invite scholars from the fields of Humanities, Social Sciences and Defense Studies to discuss and deliberate on the literary, cultural and the related domains from India, Asia, Australia and the other countries in Indian Oceanic region.

In our context, it might be to construct or at least explore a new disciplinary paradigm or institutional apparatus for Asian, or more specifically, Indic-Asian and Australian studies. In this sense, to represent

Asia would be to compete for legitimation in how it is understood or studied, moreover to declare oneself as an interested party or stakeholder in such a process. It is to challenge other, for example, imperial representations of Asia and to offer alternatives to them. The composition of those invited to our conference would, ideally, include experts from East Asia, China, India, and West Asia, attempts to address the challenge to represent different regions of Australasia, their inter-relationships, and their connections with global flows in capital, culture, and science and technology.

As far as India is concerned, it has been part of a larger oceanic oikumenethat might more fruitfully be seen as part of older, looser, and more fluid Indian Ocean cross-currents of cultural formation and circulation. With the end of empire and the rise of independent nations in the Indian Ocean system, these networks are today almost forgotten, Yet, it is of vital importance to reconsider, if not resurrect, them if we wish to arrive at a better understanding not just of the Indian Ocean as a spatial-political location, but of Australasia. The littoral nations of the Indian ocean were shaped as much by an oceanic hybridity as by continental compulsions. They came to embody a special type of anti-imperial cosmopolitanism. The space which gave rise to such discourses constitutes a vital link between a world before Western imperialism and the globalized world of the future which we might regard as coming into being before our very eyes *after* Western hegemony.

The areas like history, literature, archaeology, defense studies and genetics among other disciplines continue to play influential roles in developing understanding of Indian Ocean parts for all periods. All this and many more concerns compel us to debate as to how, why and what of Indian Oceanic exchanges in India, Asia and Australia draw us together and define Indian oceanic region. It is time to redefine the phenomenon of globalisation and to question globalisation as a concept of and what residues tangible or otherwise bring out the cohesiveness among the nations that have or will impact on the ocean. The conference proposes to invite scholars from the fields of Humanities, Social Sciences and Defense Studies to discuss and deliberate on the literary, cultural and the related domains from India, Asia, Australia and the other countries in Indian Oceanic region.

### **Subthemes**

- Cultural exchanges in Past, Present and Future
- Expressions of Memories

- Regional Cooperation & Differences
- Maritime Cultural Landscapes
- Cultural Pluralism
- Transnational Issues
- Literary Commons
- India Asia Connections
- Regional, Economic & Socio-cultural exchanges
- Diaspora Studies
- Shared Knowledge Systems
- Ecology, Environment & Climate Change
- Aboriginal Studies
- Patterns of Self and Other

In the 21st century, Asia has emerged as an undeniable geo-political force. This is certainly due to Asia's rising economic power. Rising Asia is both a challenge and opportunity for Australia, and in such changing geo-political situations, strong economic and cultural connections between Australia and Asia (India in particular) becomes imperative.

When we reflect upon Australia's relationship to Asia, it's the Indian Ocean which comes immediately to our mind. Since Australia's ancient connections with Asia have always been maritime, it is important from the viewpoint of Australia and Asia both that the possibilities of economic, security, maritime, cooperation and friendships are explored.

An International conference on "*India, Asia and Australia: Oceanic Encounters and Exchanges*" was organized at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi from 29-31 January 2020 in collaboration with Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Indian Association for the Study of Australia, New Delhi & Vasanta College for Women, Rajghat. Professor Ananda Prabha Barat, HOD, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University and Professor Anita Singh, Fellow, IIAS were the conveners of the conference. Welcome address was delivered by Professor Ashok Singh, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University. Professor A.P. Barat, convener of the conference introduced about the concept note. Remarks was delivered by Professor Pradeep Trikha, General Secretary, IASA, New Delhi. Addressed by Professor Rakesh Bhatnagar, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Inaugural address was delivered by Professor Makarand R. Paranjape, Director, IIAS. Vote of thanks was proposed by Professor Anita Singh, Fellow, IIAS and convener of the conference.

Participants:

- Professor Santosh K. Sareen

- Ms. Upasana Gupta
- Ms. Ritika Kumari
- Professor Bill Ashcroft
- Professor Peter Gale
- Dr. Nirban Manna
- Ms. Kavita Singh
- Mr. Manish Kumar Gupta
- Nirojita Guha
- Akshata Bhatta
- William De Souza
- Ipsita Sengupta
- Sonia Singh Kushwaha
- A S Kushwaha
- Arti Nirmal
- Saurabh Meena
- Mr. Sabir Mirza
- Ms. Nidhi Jaisawal
- Professor Paul Sharrad
- Professor Alka Singh
- Dr. Malathy H.
- Ms. Anjali
- Ms. Arpana Kumari
- Mr. Shree Kamaljee
- Mr. Swetaan
- Mr. Michael Atkinson
- Ms. Kumari Preeti
- Dr. Praveen Patel
- Ms. Agrima Mishra
- Mr. Vishal Singh
- Ms. Aleena Manoharan

- Mr. P. Mishra
- Mr. N Kumar
- Ms. Ritu Pareek
- Ms. Meenakshi Jain
- Ms. Shipra Singh
- Ms. I S Ghatak
- Mr. R Samal
- Dr. Manjari Jhunjunwala
- Dr. Gitanjali Singh
- Ms. Zeba Khan
- Ms. Renuka Singh
- Mr. Ashish Kumar Srivastava
- Mr. Chandraboli Ganguli
- Ms. Deepti Tiwari
- Mr. Avishek Deb
- Ms. Isha Seegar
- Ms. Jasmeet Gill
- Ms. Lipika kankaria
- Mr. Sutanuka Banerjee
- Dr. Amit Upadhyay
- Dr. Saurah Kr. Singh
- Mr. Kirti Chandan Ajad
- Mr. Surjeet Mahata
- Ms. T S Kavitha
- Ms. Neha Mishra
- Mr. Mahesh Sharma

- Mr. Richick Banerjee
- Dr. Malathy A.
- Mr. Jayjit Sarkar
- Ms. Anjali Singh
- Dr. Vivek Singh
- Dr. Pravin S Rana
- Mr Sailesh Kumar Singh
- Mr. Manish Kumar Gupta
- Mr. Durbadal Bhattacharya
- Mr. Padmnabh Trivedi
- Ms. Smita Jha
- Ms. Renuka Singh
- Mr. Vishwa Bhusan
- Dr. Meenakshi Jain
- Dr. Hariom Singh
- Ms Sonali Bhattacharjee
- Ms Arpita Saha
- Mr. Rohan Kumar
- Ms. Megha Choudhary
- Kumar Gautam Anand
- Professor Angshuman Kar
- Professor Chandrakala Padia
- Ms. Payoli