

EDITORIAL

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Welcome to Volume 4 of *Indialogs Spanish Journal of India Studies*. This issue is partially devoted to Indic Crossings as four of the articles are reworkings of papers presented at a conference organized in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in November 2015 which debated issues related to *Relations and Networks in Indian Ocean Writing*, and a fifth article by Rohini Bannerjee which captures the ethos of the event. The conference focussed on the Indian Ocean as a unifying element, connecting peoples and events across the ocean and at the same time as a divisive element that fragments and distances communities through space and time. The Indian Ocean is indeed a mine of cultural experiences for multiple connections link the countries of its western shores with the Indian subcontinent. The article by Shihan de Silva discusses a community that has often been ignored by scholars of Indian Ocean studies: the African slaves, sailors, soldiers and traders who ended up, voluntarily or not, in various parts of Asia before European colonization. De Silva argues that the diasporic consciousness of these Afro-Asians, now after several generations integrated into their hostland, is expressed through their strong cultural memories. Rohini Bannerjee's article analyses Ananda Devi's 2007 novel, *Indian Tango*, which denounce ideologies rooted in patriarchal traditions and restrictions thus rejecting assumptions that menopausal women are asexual and undesirable. The inclusion of a novel by a Mauritian writer of Indian origin underscores the interest of the journal in foregrounding the Indian Ocean as a network rather than as discrete geographical regions. Maria-Sabina Draga reads the first novel of Amitav Ghosh's Indian Ocean trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* (2008) as an example of this kind of tracing of routes and connections across the Indian Ocean. Her analysis of the novel, which is set at the time immediately preceding the opium wars, focuses on Ghosh's reconsideration of human relationships and hierarchies from an ecocritical perspective. Sneharika Roy offers a different perspective on Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. She argues that indentured labour can be viewed as much more than the social

death resulting from crossing the *kala pani*. Roy suggests that Ghosh's novel highlights the karmic rebirth that can be achieved after the indignities and hardships of slavery and indentured labour are overcome. Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhury's article, while not strictly adhering to the theme of *Indic Crossings*, discusses the theme of fragmentation and the peril of oversimplification of the complex racial, religious, social and cultural identities of India. Taking the Sikh massacres of 1984 in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as her starting point, she deals with three short films and the concerns regarding religious intolerance, questions of identity, legal silences and deliberated muting of the subject.

The next three articles are on diverse but highly significant issues, two of which deal with tribal people and their cultures. Shyamasri Maji analyses the idea of Malgudi, the imaginary town created by R.K. Narayan in many of his novels. From her understanding of space as a social interface of cultural practices and experiences of the people in a specific locality, Maji compares the spatial significance of Malgudi in relation to the author's style of representing the Indian nation in the printed text, specifically in his novel *The Guide* (1958). On the other hand, she argues that the film version of this novel deviates in crucial ways from Narayan's original text. Jogamaya Bayer discusses Mahasweta Devi's novella, *Pterodactyl*, *Puran Sahay*, and *Pirtha*. She claims that Devi insists on the responsibility of writers and journalists to disseminate knowledge about endangered communities and cultures, such as the *adivasi*. The appearance and death of the prehistoric bird work as a premonition of a future ecological devastation. Likewise, the mourning of the *adivasi* can be interpreted as a metaphor for their passive resistance to the cultural violence that has been leading to their extinction. The *adivasi* feature indirectly in Sergio Román Aliste's overview of the work of Indian artist Jagdish Swaminathan. The idea of the art centre Bhārat Bhavan in Bhopal was an innovative project in the international context of the 1980s, despite the fact that it received a limited projection due to the historical vicissitudes it suffered. Román states that the folk and *adivasi* art shown in the centre was often denied the category of contemporary art whereas artists like Swaminathan have shown how urban and rural artistic manifestations can and should coexist.

The *adivasi* are again the subject of the first text in the miscellanea section. Ana García-Arroyo combines an essay with her own poems in which she traces the major problems facing the *adivasi* from colonial times until the present. Her focus is on the

deconstruction of prejudices that *adivasi* women from the south-east regions of Orissa and santhal women from West Bengal are still faced with. Jorge Diego Sánchez's piece brings to light the work carried out by the Spanish NGO Akshy India in Amwan and other villages near Bodhgaya in Bihar. Sánchez dialogues with the director and founder of the NGO, Raquel Mason Palomeque. He includes eight photographs which exemplify the various projects that Askshy India has undertaken with special emphasis on the improvement of the socioeconomic situation of women.

The inclusion of two book reviews is an innovation for *Indialogs* but the two selected texts merit publication in this volume. Linda Anne Hemphill reviews a recent book by the prestigious American indologist Wendy Doniger, *On Hinduism*, and Himadri Lahiri discusses Somdatta Mandal's translation and edition of *Wanderlust: Travels of the Tagore Family*, which portrays the travel experiences of nineteen members of the iconic Tagore family.

The articles and miscellanea published in this volume bear witness to the breadth and vitality of current India Studies scholarship. The editor wishes to thank the authors, reviewers and copyeditors for their patience and diligence in collaborating towards another successful volume of *Indialogs*.