

Annex – Synopses of books and documentaries (books and documentaries bear the same title)

Sojourners and Settlers from the Gangetic Heartland: The Hindustani Diaspora in Singapore

By Rajesh Rai and Atmaja Gohain Baruah

This study traces the historical development of the ‘Hindustani’ diaspora – that is, the immigrants and settlers from the Gangetic heartland – in Singapore. The archival records and oral testimonies referenced in this study reveal stories of resilience and endurance, hardship, and hope – laying the basis for more halcyon days for future generations. In revealing that experience, the book is structured as follows: First, it investigates the foundations of a diaspora in Singapore set by sepoy and convict pioneers in the early and mid-19th century; second, it traces the growth of the diaspora led by transient circulators of the late 19th and early 20th century, including settlement patterns and aspects of their institutional development; third, it notes the social shifts in the community in the mid and late 20th century as members become citizens in the new nation; finally, it focuses on new connections between the old diaspora and the new diaspora in the 21st century and the implications this has had on the development of the community. While the lives of Hindustani individuals are now recognised as highly intersectional and have increasingly blended into wider Singaporean society, it is hoped that such examinations will inspire research on dissecting Indian heritage and boost public interest in the study of minor South Asian communities in Singapore.

‘Bhadralok’ Connection: The Bengali Diaspora in Singapore

By Jayati Bhattacharya, Priyam Sinha and Rajesh Rai

The Bengali community, a minority within the Indian minority in Singapore, has gone through complex historical transformations, as well as cultural continuities, and has transitioned to retaining what one could claim as ‘Bengaliness’ in the diaspora. The melting pot of cultures in Singapore infuses elements of culture, tradition, language, foodways, festivals, music, development initiatives and associations. However, within the overarching homogenisation of the Indian diaspora, the specificities of the Bengalis are usually expressed by the prevalent popular imagination and identity of an Indian. Accordingly, this study seeks to historicise the specific features of a community that has had a long history in Singapore but on whom negligible scholarly work exists. An important characteristic revealed in studying the community was/is the prominence of women’s voices and leadership within the community that is in sync with the intellectual inclination and independent thinking of the Bengalis. The community does not have either a temple of their own or a designated building space for their association, which is surprising considering the long years of Bengali settlement in the island-city. Yet, they have existed prominently as a distinct community since colonial times and adapted well with their cosmopolitan aptitudes.

Being Catholic the Tamil Way or Being Tamil the Catholic Way? The Tamil Catholic Community in Singapore

By Rajesh Rai, Pavithra Nandan Menon, Jayati Bhattacharya, Megan Sonali Lourdesamy and Vithya Subramaniam

This study begins with the arrival of Tamil Catholics in Singapore and journeys through the establishment of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes and the role it has played in the community. It notes the work of the Archdiocesan Commission for Tamil Speaking (ACTS) in creating a communion of Tamil Catholic communities in Singapore, and documents various faith, festive, and ritual practices of the Tamil Catholic community in Singapore and how these incorporate Tamil and Catholic ways. The study also engages with various generations of the community, and finds that the meaning and practice of being Tamil Catholic in Singapore is

ever evolving in the negotiations between ethnicity, religious faith, modern concerns and traditions eschewed and renewed.

Telugus in Singapore: Re-making Diasporic Identities

By Rajesh Rai, Losheini Ravindran, Jayati Bhattacharya and Vithya Subramaniam

The question of who is 'Telugu' in Singapore involves meandering through varied ideas of geography, language, migration, community, and choice. This nebulous group is thus simultaneously old and new, settled and transient, distinct and indeterminate. This study lays out these paradoxes by considering the regional and social dynamics of the early community; the heterogeneous linguistic, political, and religious affiliations of Telugu-speakers in a 'Tamilised' community; and the ethnic identity consciousness of a new composite settled and settling community. This study hence argues that while there is a long-standing, somewhat discernible Telugu community in Singapore, its core has been shifting and its boundaries remain obscure.

Business Connections, Culture and its Continuities: The Gujarati Diaspora in Singapore

By Jayati Bhattacharya, Claudia Chia Yi En, Rajesh Rai and Priyam Sinha

This study analyses the migration of Gujaratis, ventures initiated by their business communities, their cultural engagements and continuities over generations in Singapore. The Gujaratis are a diverse group, linked through their ethno-linguistic roots, who constitute a minority within the Indian minority in the city-state. Their business acumen, cultural traits, food and festivities have contributed to the heritage and richness of the Indian diaspora in Singapore. A significant proportion of the Gujarati diaspora in Singapore, are descendants of immigrants who arrived during the colonial period and have a settled presence on the island for many generations. Over the last 30 years, a new layer has been added to the social fabric of the Gujarati community, as Singapore opened up to highly skilled professionals from the subcontinent, and as more Indian corporates and firms set up offices in the global city. The avenues and institutions established by the first and second generation of Gujaratis, the 'old' diaspora in Singapore, provided the foundation for these newcomers to adapt and partake in familiar socio-cultural events, religious practices and festivals in the new land.