



University of Mumbai CoHaB Interdisciplinary Summer School

17-21 January 2014

The Mumbai Summer School(SS) was held from 17th January to 21st January 2014. In keeping with the tradition of unique climatic conditions of CoHaB SSs, begun at the SS in Northampton in March 2013, when it had snowed, in Mumbai although the calendar said it was January and Winter, the weather was comfortably warm. The Mumbai SS was organized by Nilufer E. Bharucha with the assistance of the Mumbai ESRs, Ruby Rana, Iulia Rascanu and Melanie Wattenbarger. Additionally, the Muenster ESR, Holly Morgan, who was on secondment to the Mumbai University, was also part of the organizing team. There were also 10 Mumbai University Department of English students on the organization team.

The SS was attended by 10 ESRs from Stockholm, Muenster, SOAS and Mumbai. The Northampton ESR could not attend due to ill health and one of the Stockholm ESRs had a visa problem. We also had our Advisory Board member, Coordinators from partner universities and CoHaB Associate Partner present at the SS – Avtar Brah, Michael Keith, Paravathi Raman, Janet Wilson, Florian Klaeger and Sridhar Rajeswaran. Although the Coordinators from Stockholm could not be present, they were represented by their colleague Beppe Karlsson.

In keeping with the Marie Curie ITN regulations regarding this SS, we had 10 research scholars from the Mumbai University, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mumbai and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Mumbai as participants. These research scholars had a special panel presentation on their on-going research projects. Additionally the M.A. students of the Departments of English and Sociology, who have special papers in Diaspora Studies, also audited the SS.

The SS began with a warming dinner on the lawns of the venue of the SS at the University of Mumbai on the 16th evening. The next morning on the 17th, the conference was inaugurated by the Mumbai University's Vice Chancellor Dr. Rajan Welukar. Professor Avtar Brah gave the inaugural address. She was followed by the well known Postcolonial theorist and critic Harish Trivedi from the University of Delhi. Among the others who presented lectures on issues on Diaspora, Migration and Transnationalism in the context of Literature, Cinema, Sociology, Economics and Theory were Tobias Doering from Munich, Sridhar Rajeswaran of CASII, Mark Stein from Muenster and Ajaya Sahoo from the Diaspora Centre of the Hyderabad University.

One of the key features of this SS were the three workshops of 2 hours each for presentations by the CoHaB ESRs on their ongoing research. These workshops were planned by the ESRs themselves and they were the chairs of these workshops too. As they wished to make them a peers-only affair, no one else was present but the 10 ESRs. These workshops thus gave them an opportunity to review one another's work and learn from the findings. These workshops were extremely valuable to the ESRs.

Apart from these Workshops the panel discussions by the CoHaB Coordinators (Janet Wilson, Paravathi Raman, Nilufer Bharucha and Beppe Karlsson) and by the Group for Research on the Indian Diaspora – GRID - at the University of Mumbai (Nilufer Bharucha, Kamala Ganesh, Mangala Sirdeshpande, Dolly Sunny, Kanchana Mahadevan and Renu Modi) were also found to be very useful as they enabled the ESRs to see how the participating professors had been part of formal and informal networks for long years and how this had helped their individual and collective research projects. The ESRs also learnt how such networking could have a positive impact on funding applications.

A special feature of this SS was “An Evening with Indian Writers”. This session had two Sindhi Diaspora writers – Menaka Shivdasani and Anju Makhija and the Indian poet Sridhar Rajeswaran who read their poems and discussed issues of writing from a diaspora or writing as a sojourner. This session was open to the public and was very well attended. It was followed by a Parsi dinner. The Parsis being a Diasporic community in India, Parsi cuisine is a fusion cuisine made up of Iranian and Indian influences.

The SS was conducted in a friendly and informal atmosphere with two field trips one to the British Colonial heritage sites in South Mumbai and the other to the first century B.C. Buddhist caves in North Mumbai. By way of introducing the ESRs and the Coordinators to Indian culture and traditions, a Maharashtrian specialty dinner was organized at the Viva Maharashtra restaurant and the M.A. students of the Department of English, University of Mumbai presented a dance and vocal music programme.
