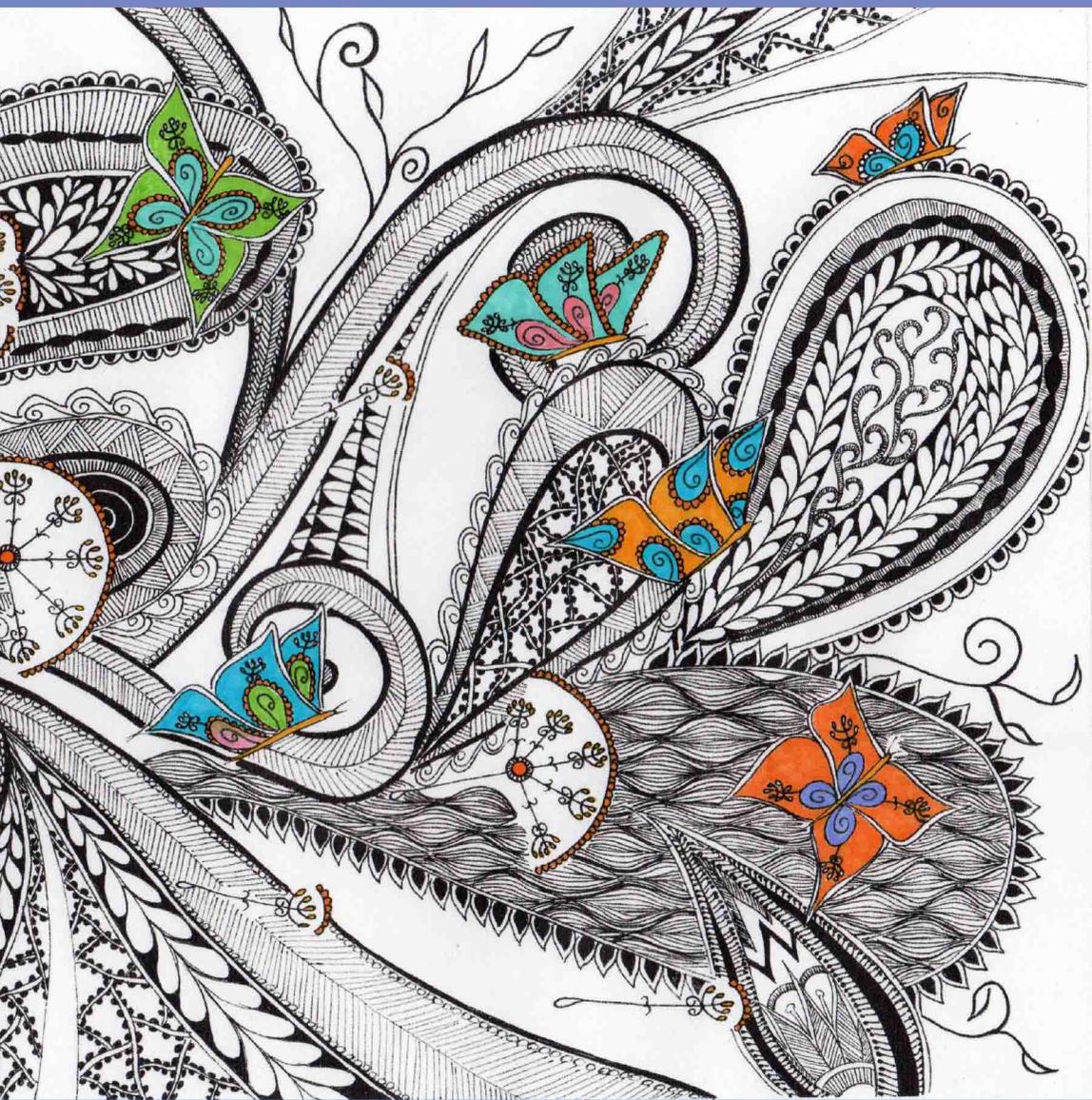


# DESI DIASPORA

MINISTRY AMONG SCATTERED GLOBAL INDIAN CHRISTIANS



EDITED BY Sam George

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SAIACS Press  
2019

DESI DIASPORA: MINISTRY AMONG  
SCATTERED GLOBAL INDIAN CHRISTIANS

Editor: Sam George, PhD

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## Endorsements

*As one of the largest diaspora population in the world, the global Indians present a huge missional opportunity for all diaspora Christians and others to connect and share the gospel in a friendly and safe environment based on concerns, struggles and challenges common to diaspora peoples. The book is an eye opener in that direction and a strategic resource for a contextual communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

**Martin Alphonse, PhD,**  
Diaspora Pastor and Retired Professor,  
Multnomah University, Oregon, USA.

*The increased movement of people through porous national borders makes today's world increasingly intercultural and pluralistic. 'The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world' defines Christian mission today as never before. This book is an invaluable source to understand the down-to-earth issues involved in this, particularly with reference to Indian diaspora. Perspectives from different angles on the faith, life and witness of Indian immigrants around the world, and the brilliant insights into challenges and opportunities of mission in today's volatile world, makes this book an imperative study for all who love the Lord's kingdom work. I highly recommend this ground-breaking contribution to understand Diaspora Missions.*

**Saphir Athyal, PhD,**  
Former Principal of Union Biblical Seminary, Pune (India)  
and Founder-Chairman of Asia Theological Association.

*The issues faced by diaspora people are monumental. Sam George has brought together an amazing array of authors to tackle many of the complex and multifaceted dimensions of mission challenges facing the Indian Diaspora. Another wonderful contribution to the ever expanding story of people on the move.*

**Charles A. Cook, PhD,**  
Professor of Global Studies and Mission,  
Ambrose University, Calgary, Canada.

*I am deeply indebted to Indian and Sri Lankan theologians who have shaped my understanding of God's Word and God's mission to the world. The Indian Christian diaspora is without a doubt geographically widespread and their contribution to global Christianity is theologically deep and vibrant.*

**Rev. Dr. Darrell Jackson,**  
Associate Professor of Missiology,  
Morling College, Sydney, Australia.

*The world has changed with the migration of people over the centuries and Christ-followers have impacted the nations all over the world. Dr. Sam George and others tell us stories of Christians of Indian Diaspora and their narratives of impacts and perhaps failures. May the Lord continue to mobilize His followers to fulfil his promises of 'Making disciples to the ends of the Earth'.*

**Dr. K. Rajendran,**  
Chairman, GIVA Trust (Global Innovative Voices and Associates),  
Bangalore, India.

*Insightful, Readable, Understandable, Engaging and Inspiring! Sam George has skilfully crafted this inter-disciplinary volume a major contribution to the growing resources in Diaspora Missiology.*

**Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira,**  
Catalyst for Diasporas, The Lausanne Movement,  
Edmonton, Canada.

*Sam George has brought together some of the leading scholars and practitioners working in the area of Indian diaspora studies today to provide a thorough yet readable overview of field. Highly recommended for those interested in this important diaspora population, as well as those involved in diaspora missiology more generally.*

**Steven Ybarrola, PhD,**  
Professor of Anthropology,  
Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, USA.

*Dr. Sam George has put together a fine collection of conceptual ideas and ground level realities which brings us up to date on the global Indian diaspora situation. We have in this book a choir of voices which not only informs and inspires, but also compels the rest of us to sing our Lord's song along with it!*

**Dr. Calvin Chong,**  
Associate Professor,  
Practical Theology, Singapore Bible College



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# INTRODUCTION:

## TWO DIASPORAS OF THE GLOBAL INDIAN CHRISTIANITY

*Sam George*

Standing on the sandy beaches of Durban in South Africa, I gazed over the vast expanse of oceans eastward and tried to imagine the coastlines of Kerala in southwestern India (where my ancestral heritage comes from) to the impeccable glittery shores of the Andaman Islands (where I was born), to the tiny island nation of Singapore (where I had worked) to the seashore in Perth, Australia (where I had managed Asia-Pacific regional business) to the shores of Jakarta (where I took over my current role as a leader of the Lausanne Movement) as well as Mombasa in Kenya (which I had visited recently). I marveled at the immense breadth of the Indian Ocean—the numerous cultures and people it has been in contact with since time immemorial.

Consequently, my thoughts naturally drifted to Indian diaspora that has so widely scattered to nearly every country in the world and how they intersect at every sector of linguistic, cultural, societal, financial and religious spheres. I was in Durban for a diaspora conference with a group of Indian Christian leaders from around the world. Asian Indians now make up one of the largest diaspora community in the world, a close second to the Chinese, and their number continues to grow rapidly. On account of the widespread dispersion of Indians around the globe, some assert that the sun never sets on the Indian diaspora, akin to the British Empire in the past! Christians constitute a significantly higher proportion in diaspora as compared to their ancestral homelands because Christians are more likely to move overseas and many Indian emigrants and their progenies have embraced the Christian faith in their adopted homelands. This book attempts to capture a slice of that narrative of the global Indian Christian diaspora in some of its diversities and complexities.

The 2017 Durban conference also marked the centenary of the end of indentured labor system of the colonial rulers. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, millions of people were contracted to work in European colonies under very inhuman conditions. Most of them were Indians and were spread across the British Empire from Fiji Islands to

Malaya to Mauritius to Natal (South Africa) to Caribbean and Guyana. The South African Indians played a pivotal role in the fight against the colonial oppression, against unjust labor laws and cruel practices of the indentured system. The racial discrimination meted out to a British educated Indian barrister M. K. Gandhi paved the way for the protest by the indentured laborers in the colonies against the British *Raj*, and Gandhi eventually returned to India to join the freedom struggle and became the Father of the Nation.

This chapter sketches a brief introduction about global Indian diaspora and Christians of Indian origin spread globally in order to understand the critical role diaspora communities play in transforming and advancing Christianity itself. Since much of this book concentrates on post-independent India and a contemporary account of Christianity in diaspora, in this opening chapter I want to take a closer look at the pre-1947 Indian diaspora and argue that the early involuntary migration out of India helped to overcome civilizational resistance against migration and led to subsequent largescale outmigration from India. It provides a glimpse of early waves of emigration out of the Indian subcontinent and the remarkable growth of Christianity over many generations among Indian settlements in different places across the world. It takes a closer scrutiny of the region of Natal in South Africa and Christian witness among and by people of Indian origin.

### **Indian diaspora: The largest and most dispersed**

The current global Indian diaspora, estimated at about 50 million in 2017<sup>1</sup>, can be broadly divided into two major categories, pre- and post-independent India as the Old and New Indian Diasporas. The independence of India in 1947 splits the involuntary and voluntary migration out of the Indian subcontinent. The forced involuntary displacement in the form of indentured labor migration dispersed about 1.5 million people for about 80 years from the 1830s to 1917, and the voluntary migration out of India for some 70 years from 1947 to the present make up the rest of the Indian diaspora. It is true that although the indentured system was abolished in 1917 and no official recruitments were carried out, the forced servitude of Indians continued at colonial outposts until 1947. Some of the early voluntary migration out of independent India took people to British establishments or commonwealth nations. But subsequently, the educated and skilled workforce of India explored opportunities wherever they could find and continuously grew in number year after year. For over the last decade, the diaspora remittances to India remained the highest of all nations, even in the midst of a global economic slump, and annual budgets

of some Indian states such as Kerala, Gujarat and Punjab rely heavily on remittances sent by her overseas resident children.

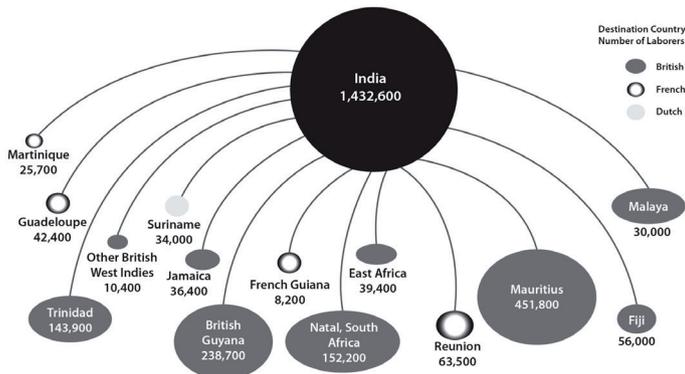
In 2017 alone, over 16 million people migrated out of India such that the United Nations claimed the Indian diaspora to be the largest in the world.<sup>2</sup> In fact, that might not be true as it was only the largest emigrant group in that year and not inclusive of others who have gone before or their foreign born children. The Chinese have a longer saga of migration and Chinese diaspora is estimated at about 60 million. The global Indian diaspora is the second largest after the Chinese, but it occurred over a shorter duration and is more dispersed. Indian diaspora are very widely scattered on account of English language proficiency, technology skills, business savviness, ethic of hard work, community orientation and cultural adaptability. Many have observed that ethnic consciousness, cultural linkages and longingness to return to ancestral lands remain high among global Indians. No wonder some allege that one can take Indians out of India, but can never take India out of an Indian!

Many migration scholars and historians<sup>3</sup> have delineated global Indian diaspora as the Old and New Diasporas at the time of India's Independence in 1947 as this helps to closely track migration by nationality in select destination countries. There is very little published on faith related issues in the Old Indian Diaspora and particularly about Christians. For a detailed account of Christianity in the Old Indian Diaspora, see my recent edited volume on South Asian Diaspora Christianity<sup>4</sup> that includes scholarly chapters from Malaysia, South Africa, Tanzania, Myanmar, and the Caribbean. Most of the chapters in this volume primarily focus on more recent Indian migrants and their children in varied locations and this project hopes to draw lessons in diaspora missions and Christian leadership in wide-ranging diasporic contexts.

Any estimate of diaspora communities is more complicated to determine precisely than generally perceived. Most estimates account for annual migrants leaving a country or those who arrive in another country and not the cumulative population of a specific ethnicity in a nation or children born to the migrants in foreign countries. Moreover, at Independence, the Indian subcontinent was broken up into several countries and lineages are tricky to ascertain. Any erroneous identification, inter-ethnic marriages, increased mobility, transnational habitations and wrongful record-keeping makes assessment of diaspora communities very difficult. Hence, our attempt is not to arrive at accurate demographical details of the Indian diaspora, but to assess broad trends in matters of faith of the Indian diaspora Christians ethnographically from an insider's perspective by select scholars in different regions of the world.

## The old diaspora: Indenture system

Between the 1830s and 1917, around 2 million people signed up for a ten-year term (later reduced to five) to work in European colonies and this practice came to be known as Indentured Labor System. When slavery was abolished in 1834, the British turned to its largest colony in India to fill the labor shortage on the sugarcane plantations and at first took a few shiploads of Indians to Mauritius and Fiji. Since most of the Indian sub-continent was under British rule, they carried out a massive recruitment spree over many succeeding decades and transported a considerably large number of laborers to their plantations to replace the freed African slaves. Later, the French and the Dutch followed the practice in their respective colonies. Also, a much smaller share of indentured laborers came from China, South-East Asia and elsewhere.



**FIGURE 1: THE OLD INDIAN DIASPORA – INDENTURE LABORERS (1830S-1917)**

The practice of indentured labor system involved a forced contract to work for a particular employer for a fixed duration and was a form of debt bondage in foreign lands. Unaccustomed to sea travels, many recruits died en-route and if they reached the destination, they were treated like slaves by plantation owners. The indenture employers could sell their laborers to others for profit and failure to fulfill any part of the contractual obligation resulted in brutality. Upon completion of contract, indentured servants were given an option to return to India or renew their contract for another term. They dreaded return to India owing to social ostracization and subjugation they would experience in the hands of their own people because of caste demotion for taking long sea voyages. A few were granted plots of land after indentured servitude and the decision to stay back permanently severed their relationship with their ancestral lands. Though called by a

new name and drawn from a different part of the world, the treatment was no different such that the new labor arrangement was called a “New System of Slavery.”<sup>5</sup> This oppressive practice was banned eventually under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a form of slavery in 1948.

As a British colony, Mauritius took the largest share of indentured workers from India, approximately half a million and they make up two-third of the country’s population today. The British Raj transported over 150,000 indentured laborers to the South African colony of Natal and today they make up nine times as many in terms of population. The average income of Indian heritage South Africans is three times higher than that of black South Africans, and they are nearly twice as likely to have finished high school. The British Guyana received nearly a quarter million laborers from India in over 500 shipments, beginning in May 1838 until 1917, mostly from small villages in North India and small batches of Tamil and Telugu people. In 2012, Indo-Guyanese made up the largest ethnic group in the nation, comprising two-fifths of the entire population. The British extracted nearly 150,000 “East” Indians and exported them to the Caribbean and their population has now grown to nearly half a million in Trinidad alone. The 56,000 Indians taken to the Fiji Islands have now burgeoned to nearly half a million, about 40% of the entire population.

The indenture journey on modified slave ships meant a lot of hardship, and conditions on board the vessels were awful. These coolie workers were treated as “half slaves” and they were desperately fleeing drought, starvation and extreme poverty.<sup>6</sup> Many were coerced or deceived with rewarding jobs at overseas locations in sugar and coffee plantations. The indentured laborers were frequently mistreated, had meager food supplies and lived in unsanitary conditions. They were exploited with long working hours; wages were withheld or reduced; and they received little medical help and massive penalties for petty offences.

Nevertheless, the indentured laborers worked hard and carved out better prospects for their children. The wave of imperially regulated indentured labor migrations to Southeast Asia and South Africa was followed by a smaller group of Indian traders commonly known as “passenger” Indians who were educated servicemen, security personnel or traders. In spite of ill treatment, discrimination and repressive treatments, indentured laborers were helped by Indian traders and educated professionals. They fought for their rights, better economic options and greater equity. They educated their young and started business, catering to the needs of their own communities and others. Their sheer hard work and craftiness paid off in the long run as the ensuing generations began to flourish in indentured labor destinations.

The history of the indenture labor system and its abolition has nearly disappeared from public memory and academic research. Most of the indentured laborers were illiterates and did not record their history in any concrete fashion. Any mention of hardship is considered shameful, as a result of which much of the oral history has disappeared. However, in recent decades there has been a resurgence in the spirit of “*girmīt*” (meaning agreement among Indo-Fijians) being celebrated as the triumph over adversities and unjust laws. Many nations of the Old Diaspora have instituted the Indian Arrival Day and is celebrated with much festivity. It is a national holiday in Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Surinam where Indians form a sizeable part of the population. The centennial anniversary of the end of the indenture system was commemorated with many events around the world in the calendar year of 2017 and I was part of a historic occasion as Christian leaders of Indian origin from around the world came together to South Africa. The hundredth anniversary of the end of indenture celebrations began in Guyana in March and many events were held there. Trinidad and Tobago also hosted an international cultural event in March and the Indian Diaspora Council held a memorial event in the summer in New York City for descendants of indentured workers from Guyana, Suriname and West Indies. A commemorative function was held in Sydney, Australia which has a large community of Fiji Indians and the University of London held an international symposium on indentured workers in October 2017. The gathering in Durban in September 2017 was hosted by the Global Network of Christian Indian leaders (GONCIL) and brought together people from many nations where Indians have pitched their tents. It had a distinctive Christian and missional perspective on Indian diaspora and proved to be a major initiative to facilitate linkages between the Old and New Diasporas.

### **Desi Christians in diaspora**

The term *desi* is derived from *desh* meaning country in Hindi and *deshi* means belonging to a country. It is a slang to refer to people of Indian origin in overseas locations and is more prevalent among Hindi speakers and North Indians. It is akin to saying country cousins and includes all people of Indian origin who are living in diaspora and includes their foreign-born descendants. In this volume, I use *Desi Diaspora* as a synonym for global Indian diaspora and the particular focus of this book is Indian Christians living out of India in various diasporic locations. With recent writings and discourses on post-colonialism, people of the Old Diaspora are searching for roots by commemorating the struggle of their ancestors and imagining their new identities in diasporic terms.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in recent years, there is notable pride with the economic rise of India and consumption of globally

marketed cultural products such as clothing, spices, cricket, music and Bollywood movies among the diaspora.

Religion has played a critical role in this re-imagination by helping them to bask in the reflected glory of their motherland with all its myths and legends. As culture and religious beliefs are so intricately intertwined, the notions of identity, community and allegiances are gradually dismantled over time and new elements are introduced into the scaffolding in the process of reconstruction. As a result of the demise of some customs, heritage language and cultural skills, faith matters unless translated to be relevant for the future generations, also will suffer from the same fate. With dramatic changes occurring in spirituality and lifestyles within a generation, it is of utmost critical importance to engage in the missionary task of making Christianity to be made relevant and translated to reach all cultures and people. Christianity is a translatable faith and diasporic settings call for fresh reconceptualization of our identity, community and mission in light of the gospel for it creates fresh wind behind its sails while transforming Christianity as well as advancing its envelope.

As per the 2011 census, over one-fifth of Indo-Trinidadians are Christians, mostly belonging to Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions and a sizable number of Catholics and Presbyterians as well. Canadian Presbyterians had active missionary activities focusing on Indian immigrants in the West Indies which was later taken over by Evangelicals and Pentecostals.<sup>8</sup> Christian presence among Indo-Guyanese remain miniscule, while subsequent generations of indentured laborers in Fiji, Kenya, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Africa and elsewhere of the Old Diaspora have embraced the fold of Christianity. Long decades of disconnect from their ancestral faith, missionary engagement by Indian Christians and others from Europe, North America and host nations have drawn many to join local churches. There were almost no Christians among the indentured laborers in Fiji as most of them hailed from non-Christian Northern India. But now nearly one fifth of them have embraced Christianity. Among the Old Indian Diaspora, Christianity continues to flourish and has a reputable standing among their own people, host nations and other Christians globally.

Some indentured laborers became Christians and gained access to socio-economic upward mobility and greater equity with their colonial masters, while many others underwent spiritual transformational experiences. Witness by fellow immigrants has been proven more effective than foreign missions in Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Pacific Islands and Africa. Some joined churches with people of diverse backgrounds, but when sizable conversion occurred among early Indian laborers, they preferred to

establish their own churches and practice their distinctive culture as part of the Christian experience. Most of the Old Diaspora Christians had little or no connection with fellow Christians back in India for decades and are primarily associated with Western or global or continental church bodies. However, in the last decade or so, several Old Diaspora churches have sent missionaries back to India and other parts of the world and have joined global Indian Christian networks. In many places, the indentured laborer believers established communal, economic and political associations in order to fight against racism and discrimination in the hands of plantation owners and colonial masters.

At this juncture, I would like to briefly examine the story of indentured laborers in South Africa. The British were forced to import workers from India as locals refused to work on fields and the recruitment of Indians was not difficult as they did not require passports to transport people within the British colonies. The first group of Indian laborers were shipped across the Indian Ocean on a paddle steamer “S.S. Truro” from Madras (now Chennai) which disembarked in Natal on 16 November, 1860 and were put to work in the sugarcane fields in and around Durban. The second shipment on “S.S. Belvedere” brought Indian workers from Calcutta (now Kolkata). Over a fifty year period, about 152,184 hapless indentured laborers followed this route in 384 vessels (262 from Madras and 122 from Calcutta) to arrive in Natal. The last batch to arrive in South Africa was in July 1911.

In an historical study of Indian Christians in South Africa, Gerald Pillay<sup>9</sup> found that there were only 1.4% Christians among the Indians who were brought to Durban between 1860 and 1911 and by 1980, the share of Christians grew to 12%. More recently, as of 2015, Christians constitute nearly half of all Indians in Durban. With the steady decline of caste consciousness, vernacular usage and gains in education, there has been a steady erosion among the Hindus in South Africa. Maharaj noted that the racial politics of the *apartheid*, forced relocation of places of worship, missionary efforts of Christians, Pentecostal revivals, isolationistic tendency of Hindus and loss of links to the motherland led to a decline of Hinduism and sizeable conversion to Christianity among the descendants of the Indian indentured laborers of South Africa.<sup>10</sup> The handful of Christians of the first generation of immigrants have now swelled to a sizable number and significant leadership roles taken up by Indians in South Africa, Kenya, Malaysia, Fiji, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

Godfrey Harold recorded a timely corrective history of Indian Christians in South Africa<sup>11</sup> and dispels common misconceptions about the origin and faith of Indian descendant Christians there. Himself a

fourth generation Indian origin, born in Durban and now teaching at a Baptist seminary in Cape Town with multiple doctorates, this scholar argues convincingly that among indentured laborers who arrived in Natal between 1860 and 1911, there were a total of 6000 Christians and they, not Western missionaries, were primarily responsible for much of the ministry to Indian laborers. In fact, the first two families to step on the South African soil were Christians, when the rest of the labor recruits hesitated to disembark fearing Africans to be cannibals, and they did so carrying a Tamil Bible in their hands and praying in native tongues for safety and prosperity in that alien land. A recent account of injustices meted out to the early indentured labors is well captured by a local South African pastor and community worker.<sup>12</sup> Of course, there was help from mission-minded British Christians and churches, but leadership of Indian ministries, generation after generation, came from within the community. A century and a half later, about a quarter of all people of Indian descent in South Africa are Christians. Some of the largest churches in South Africa are led by Indian heritage leaders, who are now sending missionaries to the rest of Africa and other parts of the world.

Being strangers in many strange lands, indentured laborers and their descendants have preserved some traditions such as clothing and recipes, but have lost others. The diasporic imagination and living comes with a series of losses and gains. In order to gain something, they are forced to lose some other things without the benefit of knowing how things will turn over long periods of time. It comes with selective remembering and forgetting of the old world as well as selective embrace and rejection of the new world. The ancestral language usage has atrophied or evolved with prolonged detachment from ancestral lands or lack of instruction in mother tongues. For example, the Old Diaspora studies on Bhojpuri and Hindi in Mauritius<sup>13</sup> or Tamil in Singapore<sup>14</sup> or Malayalam<sup>15</sup> in the Middle East and the United States, found that all these have depreciated significantly or evolved over time. The caste delineations were broken over the long sea travel itself on account of dietary laws, inability to maintain social dependence and taboos on each other for sheer survival. But it must be noted that most of the educational and professional employment prospects tend to gravitate disproportionately toward migrants of higher caste and urban middle class of India.<sup>16</sup> With limited choices in mate selection in foreign lands, the caste rules and prejudices could not be preserved as people got married across caste lines and outside of the community. For example, I personally know of Sindhis in Hong Kong who have married Chinese, Gujaratis have tied the knot with Africans in Kenya, and children of Punjabi men and Mexican women in California, or Keralites married to Norwegians and Tamils wedded to Germans.

## Outline of the book

This book on global Indian Christian diaspora comprises of sixteen chapters written by Christian leaders and scholars in diaspora who are in the forefront of diasporic life and ministry. All contributors are carefully chosen from varied linguistic, ecclesial and cultural backgrounds, located in different parts of the world and are active in diverse Christian ministries. Except one, all contributors are of Indian descent, but hail from different ethnicity, generations and settlements. Besides portraying a contemporary snapshot of faith experiences in their respective diasporic contexts, these chapters validate the migratory nature of Christian faith and its far-reaching missional implications across many cultures of the world. This book explores religious sentiments and challenges facing the Indian Christian communities in diaspora in several places of settlements and analyzes how migration shaped their life and faith practices in the new world.

This book includes an ancient Christian community of India like Kerala Orthodox Christians as well as new converts of diaspora. It covers Syro-Malabar Catholics, Reformed, Anglicans, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Brethren and others. The contributors comprise of both men and women, while their mother tongues are as varied as Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati and Kannada. They work as pastors, missionaries, professors, engineers, consultants, counselors, students etc. and their expertise lie in different domains such as theology, religion, history, missiology, sociology, psychology and literature. However, this is not a comprehensive account of global Indian diaspora Christianity, but a mere glimpse of the great diversity within it while presenting numerous challenges involved and lessons to be learnt about God's mission in diasporas. It does not include any accounts from Australia or South America. They were not intentionally omitted, but could not be included due to limitations of a printed book and the challenge of writing a scholarly chapter for most of whom English is not their primary language.

This volume on Indian diaspora Christianity presents eclectic voices and traditions from different parts of the world. After this introductory chapter on Old Diaspora, George Oommen locates three basic strands of Indian diasporic Christianity, namely generation, gender and culturalized faith expressions. Varghese Mathai reflects on the historic contributions made by foreign missionaries in India toward the development of language and educational achievement which caused a worldwide dispersion of Indians in the late twentieth century. He challenges readers that such privilege comes with a responsibility to serve others in diasporic locations and ancestral homelands. John Daniel analyzes the history of the making of Tamil churches in London (UK), as people from both

India and Sri Lanka from very diverse sociocultural and political conditions come together to form a faith community in diaspora. Father Tenny Thomas paints a picture of the establishment of the historic Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians from Kerala in the United States, Malaya and Singapore. Kyle D'Souza traces the development and growth of Syro Malabar Catholic churches in the US and pinpoints challenges facing the community through a sociological analysis.

Amit Bhatia and Ushaben H. R. Patel bring distinctive voices of first generation converts to Christianity from Hindu backgrounds from the US and UK respectively, while Pritam Singh brings the voice of a convert from Sikh background from a Singaporean context. Together they explore the theme of conversion occurring in diasporic settings and the challenges it poses within family, community and respective religious contexts. Paul Sunkari identifies twelve major challenges faced by recent immigrants who work in the technology industry and offers suggestions to help immigrant perspectives on pastoral care and counseling. Ravi David reflects on his own diasporic journeys to multiple locations in New Zealand and the US, to draw out twenty key pastoral care challenges in various stages of diasporic life and integrates the pastoral and missional aspects of diaspora congregations.

Vance Masengill and Shibu Cherian evaluate the inward looking tendency of immigrant Indian Christians and the general lack of evangelistic fervor to reach fellow immigrants or people of host societies. They evaluate what it takes to infuse passion for the lost soul and compare diasporic churches in the Arabian Gulf and North America. Pastor Chandra Soans reminds us that immigrant churches have an obligation to serve the urban poor in host societies and not to remain as an affluent cloistered group. He showcases practical models to serve their church's immediate neighborhoods and overcome hurdles among immigrants for missional engagement in diaspora.

Stanley John, a second generation Indian from Kuwait, unpacks from a case study with Kerala pastors in Kuwait to locate transnational linkages and ecclesiastical agents involved in ministry in diasporic contexts. Denominations, pastors and lay individuals play distinctive roles in a diasporic church ministry and fixed duration of tenure presents both practical and financial dilemmas. Suraja Raman, a second generation Singaporean, excerpts from recent cross-cultural teaching experience in a seminary in Kenya and advocates a model for global South-South partnership between churches and mission agencies. This avoids issues of dependency, focuses on resources, bypasses well-resourced Western and global North churches while helping these partners view each other as equal

partners in the mission of God. Geomon George examines the diaspora church in the gateway city of Indian immigration to the US in New York, particularly generation discontinuity among Kerala immigrants. Finally, I conclude this volume with a brief overview of the voluntary migration out of India in recent decades and present a contemporary survey of religious faith in the New Indian Diaspora with some missiological reflections on overcoming of Indian religious restraints on crossing of black waters (*Kala Pani*) as scattered people become a part of the mission of God.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The official Overseas Indian population according to India's Ministry of External Affairs is 31.2 million which includes both NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) and PIOs (Persons of Indian Origin) compiled in December 2017. [http://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs\\_1.pdf](http://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs_1.pdf) (accessed 15 March, 2018). See Appendix A and B. However, the term diaspora is inclusive of foreign born children of immigrants, not just the first generation immigrants to a foreign country and children of intermarriages to people of other ethnicities in foreign lands. Moreover, in the last two years there has been a significant surge in Indian emigration globally. In the year 2017 alone, there were more than 16 million Indian migrants stock (see link below).
- <sup>2</sup> See [www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimatesgraphs.shtml?4g4](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimatesgraphs.shtml?4g4) (accessed 15 September, 2017).
- <sup>3</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Thomas Sowell, *Migration and Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Brij V. Lal, (ed), *Encyclopedia of Indian Diaspora* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); Ajaya K. Sahoo and K. Laxmi Narayan, *Indian Diaspora: Trends and Issues* (New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2008); Laxmi Narayan K., Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Gauri Bhattacharya, *The Indian Diaspora: Historical and Contemporary Context* (New Delhi: Rawat Publishers, 2009); Parvati Raghuram, Ajaya K. Sahoo, Brij Maharaj, and Dave Sangha, *Tracing an Indian Diaspora: Contexts, Memories, Representations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008).
- <sup>4</sup> Sam George (ed), *Diaspora Christianities: Global Scattering and Gathering of South Asian Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 2018.
- <sup>5</sup> Hugh Tinker, *The New System of Slavery: Export of Indian Labor Overseas 1830-1920* (London: Hansib Publishers, 1993); Patrick Manning, *Migration and World History* (London: Routledge, 2004); Dirk Hoerder, *Culture in Contact: World Migration in the Second Millennium* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
- <sup>6</sup> See Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery and Indian Indentured Labor in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998). Also, Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
- <sup>7</sup> See Brij V. Lal, *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).
- <sup>8</sup> See Kumar Mahabir, "The Indian Diaspora in the West Indies/Caribbean: A Cultural History of Triumphs and Tribulations" in Laxmi Narayan Kadekar et. al, *The Indian Diaspora: Historical and Contemporary Context* (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2009), 113-134.

- <sup>9</sup> G.J. Pillay, T. Naidoo and S. Angor, “Religious Profile,” in A.J. Arkin, K.P. Magyar and G.J. Pillay, *The South African Indians: A Contemporary Profile* (Pinetown: Owen Burgess Publishers, 1989), 23-30.
- <sup>10</sup> Brij Maharaj, “(Step)Children of the Rainbow Nation? South African Indians in the Post-Apartheid Era” in Ajaya K. Sahoo and K. Laxmi Narayan (eds), *Indian Diaspora: Trends and Issues* (New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2008), 26.
- <sup>11</sup> Godfrey Harold, “From Cane Cutters to Church Planters: The Story of Indian Church in South Africa” in Sam George (ed), *Diaspora Christianities: Global Scattering and Gathering of South Asian Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 63-75.
- <sup>12</sup> Paul Lutchman, *The Quest for Justice —Since 1860...: An Investigative and Informative Journal* (Durban, SA: Kairos Media, 2010).
- <sup>13</sup> Vinesh Hookoomsing, “Language Loss, Language Maintenance” in Laxminarayan Kadekar et.al (eds), *The Indian Diaspora: Historical Trends and Contemporary Context* (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2009), 35-53.
- <sup>14</sup> Rajesh Rai, *Indians in Singapore: Diaspora in the Colonial Port City* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 140.
- <sup>15</sup> Sam George, “Malayalis without Malayalam: Language Loss and Retention of Children of Kerala Immigrants” in Sam George and T.V. Thomas (eds), *Malayali Diaspora: From Kerala to Ends of the Earth* (New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2013), 178-187.
- <sup>16</sup> Padma Rangaswamy, *Namaste America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

# “INDIAN CHRISTIANS ARE GLOBAL NOW. THE SUN NEVER SETS ON THE INDIAN CHRISTIAN DIASPORA.”

Indians make up one of the largest diaspora community in the world and Christians constitute a relatively larger share of it. Indian Christians are more likely to migrate abroad on account of not being imprisoned to the land or culture as espoused in some civilizational and religious beliefs. They have successfully transplanted themselves in every time zone all over the globe and have recreated and adapted their native faith practices in foreign lands. Many from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds have embraced Christianity in their places of settlement.

This book portrays a contemporary account of Christians of Indian origin who live around the globe and showcases triumphs and challenges of religious life of dispersed people. It presents Christian experiences from a plethora of discrete perspectives like Orthodox, Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical and Pentecostal of Kerala, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Gujarati, Punjabi, Goan and other backgrounds.

This book comprises of diasporic communal history, struggles of identity and belonging, religious conversion, preservation and adaptation of faith practices, ties between ancestral homeland and host nation and generational tensions from a pastoral and missiological dimensions in diaspora.

I recommend *Desi Diaspora* wholeheartedly to everyone who desire to understand the far-reaching repercussions of migration on religious faith and particularly to Indian origin followers of Jesus all over the world.

**Ram Gidoomal, CBE, International Entrepreneur, London, UK.**

*Desi Diaspora* introduces readers to multiple dimensions of diaspora mission and to appreciate a variety of expressions of Christianity among diasporic Indian communities. This is a much needed volume and highly informative, deeply insightful and truly inspirational!

**Dr. T.V. Thomas, Chairman Global Diaspora Network**



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