

KALA PANI CROSSINGS #3

February 21–24, 2024

Across the Oceans: Post-Indentureship Trans-Oceanic Transformations

Conference convenors

Prof Judith Misrahi-Barak, EMMA, University Paul Valéry Montpellier 3
Prof Alexis Tadié, English Literature, VALE, Sorbonne University

Institut Français de Pondichéry partnership with
EMMA, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3,
DIRE, Université de La Réunion,
IHRIM, ENS de Lyon,
VALE, Sorbonne University,
Alliance française de Pondicherry

Venue: French Institute of Pondicherry

Languages: English and French

Contact: kalapanipondicherry2024@gmail.com

Info: [French Institute of Pondicherry](https://www.institutfrancaisfrance.org/pondicherry/)

Day 0: Wednesday, February 21

18:30-22:00 Cocktail and Conference dinner on the terrace of IFP

Day 1: Thursday, February 22

- 9:30 Registration
- 10:00 Welcome Address by Dr **Blandine Ripert**, Director of the IFP & Introductory Remarks by Prof **Judith Misrahi-Barak** and Prof **Alexis Tadié**
- 10:15 **Panel 1: Problematizing the Archive in Kala Pani Historiography**
Chair: Judith Misrahi-Barak
- 10:15 • **Nandini Dhar**, 'Please do not sign this piece of Paper': The Spectre of the Contract, Questions of Choice and Questions of Archive in Debarati Mukhopadhyay's Narach
- 10:35 • **Apala Kundu**, Through Diasporic Eyes: 'Home' and/in the Archive
- 10:55 • **Gabrielle Jamela Hosein**, The Botanical Afterlife of Indenture: Mehndi as Imaginative Archive
- 11:15 • Discussion
- 11:30 **Tea break**
- 12:00 **Keynote 1: Mohamed Shafeeq Karinkurayil, "Grounds of Laughter: the Performative Imperative in Circular Migration"**
Chair: Vanessa Guignery
- 13:00 **Lunch**
- 14:00 **Panel 2: Kala Pani in the Gulf**
Chair: Alexis Tadié
- 14:00 • **Jaine Chemmachery**, Temporary People by Deepak Unnikrishnan: Archiving the Lives of Malayali Workers in the Gulf
- 14:20 • **Praveen Mirdha**, Dialectics and Differentials of Transoceanic Labour Migration from the Indian Subcontinent in the Contexts of Indentured Travails and Gulf Migration
- 14:40 • Discussion
- 15:00 **Tea break**
- 15:15 **Panel 3: Kala Pani through Art and Food**
Chair: Shalini Puri
- 15:15 • **Tessa Alexander**, Reconnecting Through Visual Art, In Search of My Foremothers
- 15:35 • **Siba Barkataki**, From Alimentary Subjugation to Culinary Cosmopolitanism: Tracing the Journey of the Old Indian Diaspora through its Story of Nourishment
- 15:55 • **Antara Chatterjee**, The Journey of the Dal Puri across the Oceans: Diaspora, History and Culinary Memory in Richard Fung's Dal Puri Diaspora
- 16:15 • Discussion
- 19:00 **Cocktail and dinner at the French Consulate on the invitation of Madame Lise Talbot-Barré, Consule Générale de Pondichéry 2, Marine Street, Pondicherry**

Day 2: Friday, February 23

10:00 Panel 4: Transoceanic Archipelagic Connections and the Memory of Indentureship: the Case of Le Trait-d'Union

Chair: Jenni Balasubramanian

- 10:00 • **Ananya Kabir**, Kala Pani Crossings through the lens of Le Trait d'union: An Argument for Creolised Archipelagic Memory
- 10:20 • **Sandrine Soukai**, Charting Transatlantic Connections of Indentureship from Pondicherry to the French Caribbean through the Indian Ocean
- 10:40 • **Luca Raimondi**, Post-indentureship 'indianocéanisme' through the pages of Le Trait-d'union
- 11:00 • Discussion

11:15 Tea break

11:45 Keynote 2: Peggy Mohan, "Jahajins: When Women Migrate"

Chair: Ritu Tyagi

12:45 Lunch

13:45 Panel 5: Caste, Gender and Sexuality across the Kala Pani

Chair: Senthil Babu

- 13:45 • **Dickens Leonard**, The Coolie Heritage: Tamil Diaspora, Cultural Expressions, and the Question of Caste
- 14:05 • **Atreyee Phukan**, (Re)Centering a Kala Pani Poetics
- 14:25 • **Sahithya Venkatesan**, Beyond Kalapani: Indentured Labor, Plantation Mobilities and the Emergence of Radical Movements in the Eastern Cauvery Delta
- 14:45 • Discussion

15:00 Tea break

15:15 Panel 6: The Fictions of Kala Pani

Chair: Himadri Lahiri

- 15:15 • **Swagata Bhattacharya**, Daughters of Twilight: The Inheritance of Indentureship in South African Women's Writing
- 15:35 • **Kavya E M**, The Diasporic Fantasy: Demythifying the Ideal through Contemporary Malayalam Novels
- 15:55 • **Amit Ranjan, Ncert and Kanika Bhalla**, Dat Rain No Wash No Pain: Archiving Despondency in No Pain Like This Body
- 16:15 • Discussion

17:30 Screenings followed by discussions at the Alliance française

Discussants: Annu Jalais and Judith Misrahi-Barak

- *Histoires d'engagisme*, by Joy Banerjee
- *Remembering Mariamman: the Remaking of 'Hail Mother Kali'*, by Stephanos Stephanides & Constantinos S. Constantinou

58, Suffren Street, Pondicherry

20:30 Dinner at The Spot (registration needed)

Day 3: Saturday, February 24

10:00 Panel 7: The Bhojpuri Connection across the Kala Pani

Chair: H. Kalpana

- 10:00 • **Ruchika Rai**, Bidesia and Batohia: Story of Indentured Ship, Migration and Distorted Identities through Bhojpuri Folksongs
- 10:20 • **Sarmistha Mondal**, Travelling Subject, Migrating Language: Bhojpuri in the Caribbean Islands in Peggy Mohan's Jahajin
- 10:40 • **Ridhima Tewari**, Liminality, Transformation and Restored Masculinity: Examining the Bidesiya's Negotiations of the Arab World in Contemporary Bhojpuri Cinema
- 11:00 • Discussion

11:15 Tea Break

11:45 Keynote 3: Thania Petersen, "DHIKR: An Act of Remembrance"

Chair: Judith Misrahi-Barak

12:45 Lunch

13:45 Panel 8: Kala Pani and the Experience of Migration

Chair: Corinne Duboin

- 13:45 • **Pierre-Yves Trouillet**, What Remains of Kālāpāni? The Hindu Migratory Taboo as Experienced by the Migrant Priests of the Tamil Diaspora Temples
- 14:05 • **Valentine Lerouge**, Transcontinental Nationalism in the Novels of Anita Rau Badami
- 14:25 • **Arnab Kumar Sinha**, Migration from India to Burma and Return: Contextualising Dwelling and Hospitality in Eugene Lawrence's The Lacquered Curtain of Burma
- 14:45 • Discussion

15:05 Tea Break

15:20 Panel 9: Home and Belonging

Chair: Vanessa Guignery

- 15:20 • **Natacha Lasorak**, Drifting and Belonging in The Sly Company of People Who Care (2011), by Rahul Bhattacharya
- 15:40 • **Gargi Dutta**, Spatial and Emotional Dimensions of 'Home' in Maniam's Between Lives and Preeta Samarasan's Evening is the Whole Day
- 16:00 • **Cédric Courtois**, 'Kalapani [...] / means to mislay / your name, means orphaning, / means taking the name / Coolie': Rajiv Mohabir's Cutlish (2021) and Antiman: A Hybrid Memoir (2021)
- 16:20 • Discussion

16:30 Book launch: Kala Pani Crossings, Gender and Diaspora

Chair: Ananya Jahanara Kabir

With co-editors H Kalpana, Judith Misrahi-Barak, Ritu Tyagi, contributors Joshil K. Abraham, Jenni Balasubramanian, Gargi Dutta, Himadri Lahiri, Praveen Mirdha, Peggy Mohan, Arnab Kumar Sinha, Vijaya Rao, Stephanos Stephanides, Ridhima Tewari.

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Prof Alexis Tadié, English Literature, VALE, Sorbonne University

Conference co-organisers

Dr Blandine Ripert and Dr Senthil Babu, Institut Français de Pondichéry (IFP)
Dr Jenni Balasubramanian, Department of French, Tagore Government Arts and Science College, Puducherry
Prof Corinne Duboin, Black diasporic and Postcolonial Literature, DIRE, University of Reunion Island
Prof Vanessa Guignery, British and Postcolonial Literatures, IHRIM, ENS-Lyon
Dr Ritu Tyagi, French Studies, University of Pondicherry

Scientific committee

Dr Senthil Babu (Institut Français de Pondichéry)
Dr Amba Pande (Jawaharlal Nehru University, JNU)
Dr Valérie Magdelaine (University of Reunion Island)
Dr Ashutosh Kumar (Banaras Hindu University)
Prof Saugata Bhaduri (Jawaharlal Nehru University, JNU)
Prof Himadri Lahiri (Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal)
Prof Mala Pandurang (Dr BMN Autonomous College, Mumbai)
Dr Sandhya Rao Mehta (Sultan Qaboos University, Oman)

