



**SOUTH ASIA
INSTITUTE**

SOAS University of London



SSAI Annual Review

2017/18

www.soas.ac.uk/south-asia-institute



TABLE OF CONTENTS



FROM THE DIRECTORS:

A NOTE FROM SSAI DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR EDWARD SIMPSON	2
A MESSAGE FROM SSAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DR NAVTEJ PUREWAL	4
DEVELOPING RESEARCH AGENDAS	6
MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS	8
OTHER EVENTS	12
ENHANCING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE	16
SSAI SCHOLARS	24
SSAI STAFF PROFILES	28



Welcome to this Review of the events of 2017-18.



The Institutes are key to the international profile of SOAS. We engage with the world to support and strengthen our academic departments and enhance the work of attracting students, funds and interesting minds onto our campus. We represent and promote the collective research and

engagement of SOAS in each region. We welcome people to SOAS as an accessible public-facing intellectual and organisational focus.

When I took up this post at the beginning of last academic year, I did not fully understand the role of our three regional institutes, nor had I grasped the reach and significance of their activity for the promotion and enrichment of SOAS as a whole.

Since last September, the South Asia Institute has hosted two annual lectures, over 40 seminars, three conferences, seven film screenings, nine book launches and five musical performances. In October, we marked Durga Puja with the help of Sanjukta Ghosh and in January, Pongal, the harvest festival, at the Thiruvalluvar statue with friends from the Tamil community and the Indian High Commission. These events have brought hundreds, if not thousands, of new faces into SOAS, as well as seen the return of many old friends.

Through this activity, we work closely with Sunil Pun our Executive Officer and Jane Savory, Charles Taillandier-Ubsdell and Dorinne Tin Ming Kaw in the Centres and Programmes Office. I thank them whole-heartedly for their dedication and care.

SOAS has the largest concentration of academics in the world working on South Asian themes – outside the region itself. We are truly a world-leading institution and home to many of the experts on a very wide-range of topics and through different disciplines.

The Institute represents and promotes these disparate research interests in a range of academic and government contexts. We take pride in promoting SOAS through the research undertaken by our members. Across SOAS we have major research projects working in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

Individual academics have ties to hundreds of researchers and institutions across South Asia and elsewhere in the world. As an Institute, we have worked to develop an overview of these projects, interests, connections and deep networks to enhance the identity and name of SOAS.

SOAS hosted five South Asia exhibitions in the last academic year. This makes us the leading and most active venue in London for artistic and intellectual public engagement with regional issues. We have worked with the Brunei Gallery and the curators of these exhibitions to programme and support public events, to bring extra value and additional audiences into our fantastic exhibition space.

We really have much to celebrate and to be proud of. However, these are the activities and faces that you see.

Less visible, are the hundreds of hours of meetings that have taken place to promote and connect SOAS with students, scholars, university managers, journalists, politicians and donors. We have visited nine universities in Pakistan and India, and made considerable progress in negotiating new partnership arrangements with two private universities.

We have met and given talks to alumni and with Marketing and Student Recruitment attended a recruitment fair in Mumbai. We have also met with language campaigners, business councils, media groups, NGOs and corporates to promote SOAS and to explore new possibilities. We work closely with some of the Trustees of SOAS, particularly Sir Dickie Stagg, on both partnerships and country-specific strategy.

Throughout the year, we have worked with the Development Office and the Directorate on maintaining existing levels of philanthropic giving as well as pursuing new avenues. With the Doctoral School, we have been able to support PhD conferences (one on South Asia and forthcoming ones on Afghanistan and Sanskrit) and other additional networking activities. For the Research Office, we have been able to identify partners and to facilitate introductions for numerous international funding bids. With the Library, we have hosted events on data management and the promotion of professional research culture among our members (and across the School).

The appointment of Steve Hopgood as Pro-Director International has given us a strong managerial and strategic steer as well as personal support. With Deborah Johnston, the Pro-Director of Teaching and Learning, we have been able to support a theatre group, Bhuchar Boulevard, to work on our campus in autumn 2018 on issues and language of 'decolonization'. With our Director, Baroness Valerie Amos, we organised a discussion in the House of Lords on caste in the UK.

In July, we hosted colleagues and students from the Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai, Punjab University, Presidency University and Jadhavpur University as part of an ongoing research network funded by the UK-India Education and Research Initiative. This award is held by the Deputy Director of the South Asia Institute, Navtej Purewal. She has worked incredibly hard within the Institute while continuing to encourage critical debate and the development of our school-wide academic research and teaching culture.

We are proud to have hosted two Charles Wallace Fellows, Epsita Halder from Jadavpur University, India and Nukhbah Langah from Forman Christian College University, Pakistan. They both brought new scholarship onto our campus and took our friendship home with them to their respective institutions. Importantly, Nukhbah was at SOAS to conduct ethnographic research in the UK.

Later in the year, Surbhi Dayal from the Indian Institute of Management in Indore also passed through SOAS while conducting research in London. I would like to think that in the years to come we can facilitate far more active and on-the-ground South Asian research engagement in London – outside the well-thumbed colonial archives.

In the year to come, we have an exciting Afghan season in partnership with the Asia Centre at the University of Sussex, a US lecture tour to promote the work of SOAS and the Institute, and partnership visits planned to Karachi, Lahore, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Colombo.

Finally, however, I would like to say thank you to our friends and followers who support and engage with our work. I hope you enjoy reading this review of happenings within our fantastic SOAS community. Please get in touch with us if you have comments or better-still ideas for future engagement.



Edward Simpson, Director

“ We take pride in promoting SOAS through the research undertaken by our members. Across SOAS we have major research projects working in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.”

A NOTE FROM THE SSAI DIRECTORS



2017/18 has been a very event-full one for the SSAI, as this year's Annual Review highlights. We have held many talks, book launches, and screenings and have also facilitated and hosted numerous academic and student-oriented activities. The SSAI continues to be a nodal point of global South Asian studies and engagement outside of the region. Because of the rich diversity of perspectives, the conversations, interventions and

debates that take place at SOAS are often like nowhere else.

While the SSAI is governed by SOAS' own managerial steer, it also reflects the interests of our community of scholars who are all in their own ways and disciplinary approaches connected to developments in the region. It is this insight and focus on critical and measured engagement which I am constantly inspired by and why I have so thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the SOAS South Asia Institute for the past four years. Those fresh, informed and critical perspectives continue to emerge from SOAS' corridors, and I hope that the SSAI will continue to keep its ear close to the ground in terms of both the 'big' developments taking place in the region but also the multitude of 'little' insights which form the soul of SOAS' South Asia community.

On behalf of the SSAI, we thank our members, well-wishers and supporters and look forward to welcoming new students and enthusiasts of South Asia onto our campus for the next academic year in continuing the work that the SSAI does.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Navtej K. Purewal".

Navtej Purewal, Deputy Director

“ Because of the rich diversity of perspectives, the conversations, interventions and debates that take place at SOAS are often like nowhere else.”





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Borders

In **March 2018** a panel discussion on **Kashmir Beyond Borders: Engagement and Dialogue Across the Line of Control** brought together a range of voices and perspectives on Kashmir. The panel highlighted the possibilities for dialogue across the LoC which go beyond the traditional statist discourse and which have potentials to open up lines of communication. The discussion concluded with an agreement that there is a growing toll of militarisation on civilians in the region in the face of growing India and Pakistan rivalry being played out in Kashmir.

In **November 2017** at the end of a year of commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Partition, the SSAI hosted a concert **Music Unbound: South Asia Beyond Borders** which offered a slightly different commemorative lens. Through performances by Madan Gopal Singh and Chaar Yaar (Delhi-based musicians), Sara Kazmi (current Cambridge PhD student from Lahore) and Rasika Ajotikar (current SOAS PhD student from Maharashtra), the theme was of introspection and reflection on contemporary times in order to consider how borders have continued to be exerted and how music and poetry continue to address the on-going themes of inequality, exclusion, separation, division, and the rise of religious intolerance.

The evening was a musical treat framed by enriching interludes and conversations.



SOAS PhD student and Felix scholar Rasika Ajotikar who performed at Music Unbound

Caste and Inequality

Caste Aside is a documentary about the fight to outlaw caste discrimination in the UK - and we were honoured to be able to screen the documentary at SOAS South Asia Institute in March 2018. The documentary followed the journey of the British government's controversial decision to introduce legislation against caste discrimination in the UK. While some members of the British Indian community believe that making caste an aspect of the Equality Act 2010 would shine a negative light on the Hindu community and create social tension, others believe that caste legislation is a necessary protection for victims. Highlighting both sides of this heated debate, the documentary speaks to Dalit rights activists, Hindu community leaders, academics and lawyers, as well as those who say they have been discriminated against on the basis of their caste - here in Britain.

We were thrilled to see that SOAS South Asia Institute attracted a mixed audience for the screening of the documentary - those who agreed with the legislation, those who didn't, and those who were new to the discussion and there to learn. This allowed for an engaging post-screening debate, which was kicked off by our panel discussion with experts on the topic. Despite the sensitive nature of the issue, the audience was extremely willing to listen and learn from each other. The South Asia Institute was able to, therefore, provide a space where this controversial issue could finally be debated between the two sides in a neutral environment - something that, as filmmakers of the documentary, we believed was crucial for the community to proceed with this issue in a productive way. It was incredible to see two very opposing sides come together in conversation - as well as finally take the time to listen to what the other had to say and attempt to understand where they were coming from.

SOAS South Asia Institute continues to bring together those who are experts in South Asian diaspora issues - as well as those who are eager to learn more about these issues. We were delighted to be able to work with alongside them to host this important topic in the South Asian community and continue providing a space for discussion, debate and learning.

Professor Kumkum Sangari delivered a lecture entitled 'On Cruelty and Care: Motherhood and the Politics of De/renationalisation' jointly hosted by the SOAS Centre for Gender Studies, MULOSIGE and the SSAI



Kumkum Sangari, University of Wisconsin



Nira Yuval-Davis, Navtej Purewal, Kumkum Sangari, Avtar Brah, Francesca Orsini

'The Great (infrastructural) Game' in South Asia: Has India Lost Out?



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**BRITISH
ACADEMY**

for the humanities and social sciences

In December, the South Asia Institute partnered the British Academy in an international forum on geopolitics and infrastructure in the region. A roundtable saw guests from government and academia discuss whether South Asia has become the site for new battles of influence in which infrastructure is deployed as a potent geopolitical resource and mechanism of territorial dominance.

The background to the discussion was of course the China-led Belt and Road initiative, which is possibly the most significant infrastructural and geopolitical development initiative of our era. Chinese roads, rails, culture and influence are being extended into South and Central Asia to facilitate trade and to ease access to Africa, Europe and Middle East.

At the time of the forum, India had not participated in the scheme, raising concerns about sovereignty in Kashmir, while being surrounded by heavily-marketed Chinese trade corridors, at the possible cost of stability in the region.

The Forum explored the implications for India of China's infrastructural expansion and how infrastructural politics could be changing the balance of power in South Asia.

Discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule.

Roads Project



Raikas on the SH31, Madhya Pradesh, India

Edward Simpson, The Director of the SOAS South Asia Institute, is also the Principal Investigator on a five-year European Research Council funded project called 'Roads in the politics of thought: Ethnographic approaches to infrastructure development in South Asia'.

The project asks, simply: Why are so many roads being built in South Asia?

On this project Edward Simpson has been conducting fieldwork in India and on the Island of Réunion, France. Work in India has been undertaken in Madhya Pradesh, where we are attempting to untangle a stretch of toll road from the local political economy and the global financial system against the backdrop of the history of thinking about roads in the country.

Insights from the project fed into a piece of work for the UK's Department for International Development on low carbon transport in the Global South titled: *An anthropologist among the transport specialists: Social science insights on the political-economy barriers to the implementation of low-carbon transport in urban South Asia and Africa.*

Over the last year, the emerging findings of the project have been by discussed by Edward Simpson, Deborah Menezes (Sri Lanka), Srinivas Chokkakula (India), Mustafa Khan (Pakistan), Luke Heslop and Laura Jeffery (Maldives) at conferences and workshops in UK, France, Netherlands, Pakistan, India, Australia, China and United States.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS



Emma Crewe awarded grant for understanding the processes of deepening democracy in Myanmar

The Global Research Network on Parliaments and People is, with funding from the AHRC GCRF Network Plus scheme, supporting artists, activists and academics in Myanmar to conduct research that helps scrutinise, understand and communicate the processes and relationships required to deepen democracy. Starting in Spring 2018 we have been awarded over £100,000 in grants to a range of exciting interdisciplinary projects investigating, among other things, political representation in Chin State, Kachin language newspapers from the post-Independence decade, the barriers to women's political representation in the Mon, Kayin and Tanintharyi Parliaments, and gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas in Myanmar.

If you'd like to learn more about the GRNPP you could talk to SSAI members Professor Emma Crewe and Dr Richard Axelby (both Anthropology and Sociology) or Dr Mandy Sadan (History) or email us at grnpp@soas.ac.uk. Information packs for the Parliaments and People grant schemes are available (in English and Burmese) from our website: <http://parliaments4people.com>.

Dr Adrija Dey was awarded a British Academy post-doctoral research fellowship at the SOAS South Asia Institute. Her research is titled Gender Based Violence in Indian Universities: A Study of Campus Life, Student Activism, and Institutional Responses. This research seeks to address Gender Based Violence (GBV) on university campuses across India by looking at how university campuses relate to the broader context and debates surrounding women in public spaces, sexual and gender based violence, and institutional structures and responses.

Research grant for Tamil Temple Towns: Conservation and Contestation

Crispin Branfoot is part of a research team with colleagues at Cardiff University, SPA Bhopal and DRONAH in New Delhi for a new 2-year project entitled 'Tamil Temple Towns: Conservation and Contestation' (2018-20) submitted to the AHRC/ ICHR 'Cultural Heritage and Rapid

Urbanisation', which received a funding of £175,194. The project arises from pressing issues in the great, living temple complexes at the heart of rapidly growing cities in Tamil Nadu. These are at once historic architectural treasures, thriving places of worship, ritual and festivals, centres for varied branches of culture, and hubs for the economy, tourism and pilgrimage. Alarmed by a spate of insensitive restorations, court cases brought by devotees in the Madras High Court led to its instructed UNESCO in 2016 to evaluate the conservation activity taking place with view to establishing appropriate guidelines. The overall aim of the project is to inform such guidelines, in order to achieve the desired impact on conservation practices in temple complexes throughout the state. The project therefore aims to have impact beyond academia by providing an authoritative body of research to inform inclusive and sustainable guidelines for heritage conservation and management in the temple cities. The stakeholders that are envisaged as benefitting from the research project include official bodies and institutions, including UNESCO, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the state of Tamil Nadu's Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department. The project and its dissemination will bring professional conservation architects and heritage practitioners into dialogue with traditional ritual and architecture

experts (sthapatis and acharyas) in order to develop culturally-sensitive principles and practices for the conservation of the great temples of south India.

UK-India Education Research Initiative (UKIERI) Workshop at SOAS

In June 2018 the SSAI hosted a two-day workshop as part of the UKIERI research methods node project between SOAS and TISS and partner universities Panjab and Presidency. Academic papers on current research were presented by participants, which included junior and senior academics, from a number of universities including Jadavpur, Panjab University, Presidency, TISS and, of course, SOAS. The workshop culminated in ideas for how academics' research and reflections on the research process can be a rich resource for students and future researchers working on South Asia.



Dr Subir Sinha, SOAS Development Studies, giving a presentation at UKIERI workshop

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

One Belt, Many Questions

In October Jonathan Hillman, fellow with the Simon Chair in Political Economy at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies and Director of the Reconnecting Asia Project spoke to an over-crowded lecture theatre about China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The event was hosted by the South Asia Institute in partnership with the China Institute.

The Belt and Road initiative is the most ambitious geo-economic vision in recent history. Hillman told the audience that the project promised over \$1 trillion in new infrastructure developments, trade agreements, and countless people-to-people ties. Perhaps the boldest dimension of the BRI, he suggested, are the overland routes between China and Europe. New railways aspire to compete with maritime transportation, which has been dominant for centuries.

Jonathan Hillman is the director of the Reconnecting Asia Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and leads online mapping and database projects on infrastructure in Asia.

*Dr Jennifer Ung Loh,
SSAI Research Associate,
introducing the panel*

Vrinda Grover awarded honorary doctorate



Delhi-based senior advocate Vrinda Grover was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws at the July 2018 graduation. Vrinda, who had also delivered the first Noor Inayat Khan annual lecture in 2017, was recognized for her stellar service in standing up for human rights law in India over the past four decades.



Pongol Harvest Ceremony



In January of 2018, we welcomed representatives of the Tamil community and guests from the High Commission of India to mark the Pongal Harvest festival in front of the Thiruvalluvar Statue at the entrance to the SOAS campus.

Scholarship of Tamil language, literature and culture have played significant roles in the development of SOAS as a world-leading academic institution and, together, we are working hard to restore some of these traditions.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

'Queer' Asia 2018: Borders X Boundaries

'Queer' Asia hosted their third annual conference in June 2018 at SOAS, University of London, Universal College London, and the British Museum. Focused on 'Bodies X Borders', the conference and film festival examined LGBTQ+ lives and experiences in Asia and within Asian diasporas. Whilst 'Queer' Asia focuses on variant 'Asian' regions, our annual activities include diverse representations of South Asia. Simultaneously, 'Queer' Asia continues to place emphasis on comparative perspectives and assessments across divergent Asian regions, allowing for debate and dialogue of similarities and differences across specific contexts.

Our 2018 conference demonstrated numerous South Asia related themes and topics. Professor Geeta Patel, University of Virginia, was one of our invited keynote speakers and was kindly sponsored by the SOAS South Asia Institute, who also hosted the post-keynote reception. Professor Patel's work spans interdisciplinary South Asian Studies, Sanskrit and Urdu, finance and capital, science, sexuality, aesthetics, literature, media, and postcolonial studies. Academic papers included Nisha Kommattam, University of Chicago, on transnational queerness in South India; Preetika Sharma, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali, on urban and queer dwelling spaces; and Moon Charania, Spelman College and Sara Shroff, New School, on untouchable theory, sex, queerness, and im/migrant women. Poster presentations included Perna Subramanian, Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, on spaces of intimacy; Monika Hirmer, SOAS, on the Kalavahana Ritual; Sourav Mandal, University of Reading, on sexual regulation and marriage; Pragati Singh, Indian Aces, on asexuality; Tanvi Prakash and Surabhi Srivastava,

Love Matters India, on LGBT media representation; Neha Panjwani, Habib University, on public transport and Khwaja Siras' experiences; and Anil Pradhan, Jadavpur University, on the 'queer postcolonial' in literature. Pragati Singh (Indian Aces) also hosted a workshop, 'A/sexuality 101: a conceptual understanding of sexuality, through understanding asexuality', examining sexuality as an amalgamation of human traits.

Relevant films screened this year included (in screening order): Poshida (Pakistan), Inaayat (Bangalore, India), My Son is Gay (Tamil Nadu, India), Is it too much to ask? (Chennai, India), Tritiya (Bangalore, India), Sisak (Mumbai, India), Ka Bodyscapes (Kerala, India). Ka Bodyscapes was accompanied by a Q&A with director Jayan Cherian, who also partook in the film festival closing panel on censorship and queer production. South Asia was further showcased in plays and art. A stage reading of 'Contempt', written by Danish Sheikh (Jindal Global Law School) and directed by Tasmine Airey, explored the Supreme Court of India's hearings concerning the constitutionality of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. The play 'Humera', written by Fatima Maan and directed by Vicky Zhuang Yi-Yin and Fatima Maan, chronicled the lives of three teenagers from differing religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds in modern Pakistan. In addition, the art exhibition showcased photographers Kannagi Khanna, Royal (Bangladesh), Anica Bawa, Leedal Priya Malhan, and fashion designers Anil Dega and Manimekala Fuller, who explored themes of kinship, family, the third gender, religion, minority communities, and identity in their works.





The Noor Inayat Khan Dissertation Prize:

This year's Noor Inayat Khan dissertation prize has been awarded to MA South Asia area studies student Amul Gyawali for his dissertation on eco-criticism in Hindi and Nepali literature. The prize, presented in October 2018, was presented at the NIK Annual Lecture being delivered by Arundhati Roy. We wish Amul all the best as he embarks on the next phase of starting doctoral studies in postcolonial literature at the University of Warwick.



Noor Inayat Foundation prize recipient.

The Second Annual Lecture: Utmost Happiness & Utmost Sadness: The diary of India nowadays was delivered by Arundhati Roy on 6 October 2018.

About Noor Inayat Khan:

Noor's life is nothing less than an inspiration for anyone familiar with her story. She was born in Moscow in 1914 to an Indian father and an American mother. She began a career as a children's writer. However, as soon as World War 2 broke out, Noor stepped up to the rise of fascism in Europe. Setting her own career aside, she decided to join the British Special Operations Executive and head to France in a bid to support the Resistance. Noor became the first woman radio operator to be smuggled into occupied Paris and ended up saving the lives of many people without any fear for consequences. However, in 1944, Noor was captured and shortly after, executed at the Dachau concentration camp. Her actions have been recognised posthumously and she was awarded Britain's highest civilian award for Bravery, the George Cross, and the Croix De Guerre by France, a military honour in recognition of her heroic efforts.

Today, Noor's bust stands at Gordon Square, not very far from SOAS.

Noor lived very close to the square, at 4 Taviton Street. Spearheading efforts to ensure that Noor's legacy lives on is her biographer and the

memorial's founder, Shrabani Basu, along with the Noor Inayat Khan Trust which includes, among others, Smita Tharoor and Aditi Khana. In the biography of Noor, Shrabani records that she would often sit and read a book in one of the benches in the square and thus, to install a bust in the same square was, for Shrabani, liking 'bringing Noor back to the square.'

The spirit that Noor embodied in her life and death lives on at SOAS in many ways, thanks to the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust.



Noor Inayat Khan
Memorial Trust

OTHER EVENTS

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Lecture 2018

The SOAS South Asia Institute in partnership with 7th March Foundation hosted the inaugural Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Lecture 2018.

We came together in partnership to explore the life and work of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman. Of the leading South Asian politicians of the time, he is the least well known, especially in the West. We created this forum in the belief that his ideas and legacies need to be debated and discussed in an open manner and that as a historical figure he deserves wider recognition.

The first lecture was delivered by James Manor, the Emeka Anyaoku Professor Emeritus of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. In what we hope will be a long series of annual lectures, Professor Manor explored how Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led the challenging struggle for a democratic alternative to military rule and for the independence of Bangladesh.

“Young people today, born after his assassination during a military coup in 1975, need to hear his story”, said Professor James Manor.

The lecture gave us the important opportunity to welcome guests to SOAS from the Bangladeshi community in London and from the Bangladesh High Commission, including His Excellency Mr. Md. Nazmul Quanine.

The 7th March Foundation aims to promote justice, equality, freedom and friendship amongst peoples regardless of race, religion, gender and geographical location, by highlighting the significance of the founding father of the independent and secular People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

“It is not that ...”: Skepticism, Moral Insight, and Ordinary Realism Veena Das

In June, Veena Das spoke to a crowded lecture theatre about her work in the slums of Delhi. She argued that people there are steeped in a kind of quotidian violence and try to discern how moral insights are generated within this scene of corrosion. Recent critiques of the genre of realism in ethnographic writing make a rather rapid shift to such genres as that of mood or the subjunctive. She reasoned instead that the issue was not that of the suspension of the real but that of the contextual embedding of the real which includes within itself such registers as that of the modalities of the possible. Moral insights are not divorced from the appeal to regions of the real but what we are led to ask what kind of real is at stake? Instead of the troubles of the eighties as in the crisis of representation, or in the unsayability of violence, the question for Das became the overwhelming, or inordinate knowledge and the imperative to absorb it in everyday forms of care.

Veena Das is Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Anthropology at the Johns Hopkins University. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the Academy of Scientists from Developing Countries. Her most recent books include *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (2007) and *Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty* (2015).



EXHIBITIONS

Brunei Gallery Exhibition: Behind the Indian Boom: Inequality and Resistance at the Heart of Economic Growth, 13 October to 16 December 2017

The Programme of Research on Inequality and Poverty has been researching why Adivasis and Dalits remain at the bottom of India's social and economic hierarchies, in spite of the country's significant economic growth. Led by Alpa Shah (LSE) and Jens Lerche (SOAS), the programme is based in the Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics, and funded by the ERC and ESRC.

The Brunei Gallery Behind the Indian Boom photo exhibition travelled across India to meet its Dalits and Adivasis – its low caste and tribal communities – historically stigmatised as 'untouchable' and 'wild'. Accounting for one in four of India's population, they are a source of cheap labour from which much of the world economy benefits, and some of the lands on which they have lived for generations are today important crucibles of global industry.

The exhibition was curated by Alpa Shah and Simon Chambers, based on the Programme of Research on Inequality and Poverty, and involved the work of several researchers, journalists and activists. It explored the precarious conditions of work and everyday struggles of the Dalits and Adivasis, spanning the production of different commodities from tea to cotton, exploring the building of the infrastructure sustaining Indian economic growth from construction to dams, and investigating the extraction of mineral resources. Importantly, it also highlighted their fight-back against the situations they find themselves in.



Behind The Indian Boom

The exhibition attracted 10,000 visitors. Special events were held for large groups of the Indian diaspora, Dalit organisations and activists, and university student groups, with in-depth talks by Jens Lerche and Alpa Shah.

A video show of the exhibition was presented for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Dalits and leading NGOs, at a meeting in the House of Lords chaired by SOAS Director, Baroness Valerie Amos.

During the last two weeks of the exhibition, five Adivasi fellows took part in an academic programme at the LSE Anthropology Department and SOAS Development Studies Department, funded by the research programme.

The exhibition concluded in a major international conference **Ground Down By Growth: Tribe, Caste, Class and Inequality in 21st Century India** at SOAS and the LSE on 7-9 December 2017, organised by Alpa Shah and Jens Lerche. Leading Adivasis and Dalit scholars and activists from India and elsewhere discussed exploitation, oppression

and discrimination of Dalits and Adivasis, and the struggle against this, culminating in the launch of the book of the same name by Alpa Shah, Jens Lerche, Richard Axelby, Dalel Benbabaali, Brendan Donegan, Jayaseelan Raj and Vikramaditya Thakur. Speakers included Joseph Bara, Bhangya Bhukya, Gopal Guru, Ruby Hembrom, Javed Iqbal, Kalpana Kannabiran, Gautam Mody, Nathaniel Roberts, K. Satyanarayana, Anand Teltumbde, Sukhdeo Thorat and Virginus Xaxa, while Nicolas Jaoul screened his film 'Sangarsh: Strife'.

EXHIBITIONS

Brunei Gallery Exhibition: Empire of the Sikhs, 12 July to 23 September 2018



Empire of the Sikhs organised by the UK Punjab Heritage Association brought over 100 artworks and objects together to tell the story of a cosmopolitan empire that almost ended British rule in India.

The Sikh Empire (1799–1849), which spanned much of modern day Pakistan and northwest India, was forged by the ‘Napoleon of the East’ Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). His empire offered a crucial buffer state between the British and incursions via the Khyber

Pass. The inevitable clash with the British came in the form of the Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845–46, 1848–49) in which the British were ultimately victorious.

The crowds that came to the gallery saw, among other things, jewellery and weaponry from the Sikh Empire including personal items that belonged to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the most famous of his thirty ‘official’ wives, Maharani Jind Kaur.

The exhibition opened with a presentation by William Dalrymple the well-known writer and historian of India.

Throughout September, the UK Punjab Heritage Association and SSAI put on a programme of thirteen weekend lectures on topics complementary and extend those of the exhibition. These events brought renowned and passionate speakers and large audiences from far and wide onto the SOAS campus.

We particularly enjoyed working with Parmjit Singh and his team on this project.

Brunei Gallery Exhibition: From Madras to Bangalore: Picture Postcards as Urban History of Colonial India, 12 July to 23 September 2018

The exhibition displayed postcards from the Indian cities of Chennai and Bengaluru between 1900 and the 1930s; then known as Madras and Bangalore.

In the early decades of the 20th century, postcards were at the height of their popularity and were an innovative and affordable form of communicating. It has been estimated that in Britain alone approximately six billion postcards passed through the British postal system between 1902 and 1910.

The postcards featured in this exhibition offer a pictorial vocabulary that translates the urban environment into “sights” that can be isolated and recorded, collected and organized into scrapbooks.

On September 14th, with SSAI support, the curators Dr Stephen Putnam Hughes and Dr Emily Stevenson, organised a conference called Postcard Journeys: Image, Text, Media to discuss further the ideas of representation and history suggested by the exhibition.



'New Directions in Studies of Pakistan: Politics, Culture, and History'

On 20 April 2018, the Centre for the Study of Pakistan co-sponsored a day-long graduate workshop 'New Directions in Studies of Pakistan: Politics, Culture, and History' held at St Antony's College, Oxford, alongside academics from Oxford and Cambridge. This brought together PhD students working on Pakistan from a variety of disciplines who focus on dynamics beyond the geopolitical, and particularly security-dominated, narratives that have overshadowed academic attention to Pakistan's cultural and social history.

The CSP was also co-sponsor of the Third Annual Bhagat Singh conference on held at SOAS on 24 March. A celebration of progressive histories spanning British India, postcolonial South Asia, and the working-class South Asian diaspora in the UK, the event consisted of two panels on revolutionary politics in the shared heritage of Pakistan and India, and a performance by Pakistani activist and theatre artist Sara Kazmi.

The Centre also hosted occasional standalone events, including the book launch of Aasim Sajjad Akhtar's *The Politics of Common Sense*. In his book, Akhtar – a SOAS alumnus – extends an argument about the nature of patronage, the formations of new modes of social class, and national and global political economy amid the rise of military-sponsored neoliberalism in Pakistan since the 1980s.

This book represents a groundbreaking contribution in the academic study of Pakistan's social history, and is at the forefront of a rising trend of field-leading critical and engaged social science produced within Pakistan during this generation of scholars.

Among the Pakistani scholars hosted or co-hosted by the CSP were Nukhbah Taj Langah of Forman Christian College University in Lahore, who was awarded the Charles Wallace Fellowship for Pakistan and whose work addresses the intersections of poetry and politics; and Jahanzeb Khan Rind, from Quaid-e-Azam University (Islamabad) and University of Balochistan (Quetta). Rind was sponsored by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission on a year-long research fellowship, and his work in the British Library and the SOAS library and archives focused on new understandings of state formation, and transversal politics, in colonial-era Balochistan.

Dr James Caron, Chair of the Centre of Pakistan





a. PhD conference: Approaching South Asia: Challenges, Connections and Creativity

How do we approach South Asia in the 21st Century? For academics, the region presents a unique set of challenges arising from its socio-cultural diversity, its complex political landscape and entrenched economic disparities. Moreover, the region is arguably as divided as it has ever been and there is an increasing emphasis on challenging the constricted academic notion of South Asia as a coherent entity that is often framed in highly Indocentric terms. These were the questions that brought together thirteen PhD student presenters and eight academic staff chairs and panellists at this year's edition of the SSAI PhD conference.

The material presented demonstrated the porous nature of both disciplinary and territorial boundaries. Four panels of student presentations, chaired by SOAS and guest academics, were followed by a plenary Round Table discussion. Chaired by SSAI Director Professor Edward Simpson and featuring two SOAS academics (Dr Amina Yaqin and Dr Feyzi Ismail) and two guest academics (Professors Ronki Ram from Panjab University, and Professor S. Parasuraman, former director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences), this session was explicitly geared towards "Challenging South Asia". Following an opening salvo from each of the four speakers, questions were open to the floor and included a debate about caste in contemporary South Asia and a lively discussion on the decolonisation agenda.



An intense day of thought-provoking presentations and discussion was concluded with a captivating performance of music and dance. Drawn from folk traditions of border regions such as Punjab and Bengal, these performances were perhaps the most eloquent argument in favour of a broad conceptualisation of South Asia that leaves room for a nuanced appreciation of sub-regional variety.

Priyanka Basu, former SOAS PhD student and South Asia archival librarian, British Library, performing at the cultural evening following the PhD conference

b. South Asia in London: Student trip to Southall

The SSAI organised a trip for current Master's students studying South Asia and the Punjabi language. In addition to a walking tour of various significant sites of community-building and language-based activities for students of Punjabi, the group also visited the recording studio of music producer Kuljit Bhamra OBE (Keda Records) and learned about the ties between cultural production of bhangra and the history and politics of the South Asian community in Southall. The day importantly included pit stops for delicious food and Kashmiri chai.



c. SSAI goes to its Alumni:



Contemporary India students at Keda Studio, Southhall



Alumni talk, CAMP, Bandra, Mumbai 2017

Student scholarships:

Bishwa Bangla Scholarship

The Bishwa Bangla Scholarships were awarded to three students scholarships were, one PhD student and two Masters students.

Rittika Dasgupta (MA South Asian Area Studies) shares her experience of being awarded the Bishwa Bangla Scholarship:

Education at SOAS is not only about the degree but about being educated in the sense that you meet other people in your peer group from all over the world. Being awarded the Bishwa Bangla scholarship at SOAS has given me the opportunity to do everything that I have done so far in life and learn as much as I could. Every time I walked into SOAS I reflected on the question 'why have I been given the great opportunity to live in a different place, to study with great people'. Living in London was like being in the centre of the world, it broadens your life and mind. It made me focus on developing my learning experience without worrying about finances. I really enjoyed my time in a multicultural place like London. I did not expect to be in a highly ranked university like SOAS, it gave me a new experience every day and I learnt more than I thought I could in one year's time. I want to thank the people who made my SOAS experience and the creative process of self-improvement and regeneration, and understanding the value of empowering and collaborating possible. As I write this, I am reminiscing how surreal this experience has been. I can say with complete confidence that it has changed my life. Receiving advice from Dr. Orsini and Dr. Dwyer throughout my journey helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses and Dr Kunnath, Dr Purewal, Dr Caron and Dr Lotter were always there to help. The scholarship made it easier for me to get the most out of SOAS, academically, socially, personally and financially.


Krishnendu Pal (MA South Asian Area Studies) shares her experience of being awarded the Bishwa Bangla Scholarship:

I was awarded the Bishwa Bangla Masters Scholarship for the academic year 2017/18. I am immensely thankful to the government of West Bengal and SOAS South Asia Institute for providing me with this opportunity to come to one of the premier institutes for South Asian Studies in the world and hone my knowledge and interests in the field of gender studies vis-à-vis South Asia. Without the financial ease which the scholarship furnished, it would have been a distant dream for me to come to London and study at SOAS. The scholarship enabled me to access the best academic resources abundant in the SOAS library as well as in the British library. I consider it a privilege to have been able to access the archives at both the libraries. I also had the opportunity to receive training under the tutelage of some of the brilliant scholars and teachers at SOAS who enabled me to think more critically with respect to my research interests pertaining to women's agency as dealt in the literatures of South Asia. In addition to the constructive academic feedback, the faculty and other staff at SSAI provided me with continual encouragement and a warm sense of belonging which made it easier to beat the London grey. I am especially thankful to Professor Francesca Orsini, the program convener for MA South Asian Area Studies for her constant academic and personal support which actually made my time here at SSAI academically enriching and enjoyable.

Sarbajit Mitra (PhD student) shares his experience of being awarded the Bishwa Bangla Scholarship: I received the Biswa Bangla Scholarship for pursuing my PhD from the Department of History, SOAS starting from the academic year of 2017/18.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the government of West Bengal and the SOAS South Asia Institute for allowing me to do my research from one of the most esteemed institutions of the world. The scholarship has allowed me to access the rich collections of the SOAS library and to work at the British Library. The access to these repositories was absolutely essential for my research area and it would have been difficult for me to access these archives without the financial assistance extended by the scholarship. I have also been given the opportunity to train myself under the supervision of the professors at the Department of History in SOAS. The Methodology seminar which I attended at the department during my first term introduced me to newer theoretical tools which compelled me to rethink my research questions more critically. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Shabnum Tejani and Dr. Roy Fischel for their support and for their valuable suggestions and comments on my work. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Eleanor Newbigin, whose support and guidance have been of great help academically and also beyond that during my stay in London for the first year of my PhD at SOAS.

At SSAI, we endeavour to make education more accessible to students. A key ingredient of these efforts is to offer scholarships which makes it possible for many deserving students to come to SOAS. We are very grateful to our donors who have made this possible. This year, in addition to the scholarships that have been on offer, two new scholarships came into existence-the Michael Palin Scholarship and the Bishwa Bangla Scholarships.



The SSAI provides an enriching environment for students coming to SOAS to study the region of South Asia.

SOUTH ASIA PROGRAMMES AT SOAS

The SSAI provides an enriching environment for students coming to SOAS to study the region of South Asia with our active schedule of seminars and events throughout the academic calendar. In addition to modules being offered as options throughout the school as a part of more discipline-based degrees, there are various ways that students can more specifically explore South Asia at SOAS through formal study*:

01

MA Intensive South Asian Studies (2-year) – School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics

This course is an exciting opportunity to develop an understanding of South Asia that is of the greatest possible depth and sophistication, and is based upon cultural and linguistic fluency as well as advanced training in an academic discipline. Students study a South Asian language and a relevant discipline and spend a semester at a partner university in a South Asian country.

02

MA South Asia area studies (1-year) – School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics

The MA in South Asian Studies provides exceptional opportunities for advanced study of one of the world's most diverse and important regions.

Students can choose to concentrate on pre-modern or modern South Asia and can acquire a basic knowledge of one of the area's languages.

The degree provides a wide-ranging interdisciplinary analysis of the South Asian countries – India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Disciplines available include Politics, Economics, Anthropology, Law and History.

The programme attracts students from a variety of backgrounds. While some wish to broaden their previous studies or experience of South Asia, others approach the programme without having a South Asian element to their first degree, but with a desire to focus their previous training on the region.

03

MSc Development Studies (Contemporary India pathway) – Department of Development Studies

The programme attracts applications from students with a variety of academic and experiential backgrounds. We welcome applications from those who have worked in a broad field of development, but also from students without relevant work experience who can demonstrate a strong interest in, and understanding of, development issues.

04

MA Global Diplomacy: South Asia-Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy (CISD)

The programme is delivered by the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy (CISD) in association with the FCO's Diplomatic Academy, using a combination of multi-disciplinary teaching, cutting-edge research and public discussion of diplomacy and international politics in a globalised world.

This programme is available as a Masters, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate level.

** Please contact the respective departments for information pertaining to these programmes.*

British Academy Fellows, Adrija Dey

I completed my PhD in media, culture and society from the University of Hull in 2016. During my PhD fieldwork in India, I interviewed multiple students and activists within university campuses. I was shocked when every person spoke about the pervasiveness of violence on university campuses in India. When I started asking more questions I soon realised almost all my participants had been subjected to some form of violence and most were unable to take any action. This is where the idea of my research project around gender based violence in Indian universities started developing from. I was already a part of Hollback Hull University in UK where we were campaigning against street harassment in the University and working to spread awareness about the nature and extent of the problem in the UK. This further helped me shape my ideas.

In 2016, I met Dr. Navtej Purewal at the conference where I approached her with my project idea. She was extremely supportive and encouraged me to apply for the British Academy Fellowship with SOAS as my host institution. Peter Niven from the Research office was also very helpful and guided me in every step of the application process.

I have been in SOAS as a British Academy post-doctoral research fellow since January 2018 and it has been the most fulfilling experience. In the first 9 months of being here, I have already had remarkable opportunities like doing a performance based teach-out on gender violence in universities on International Women's Day, writing an article for the feminist review blog, helping in the organising of the SOAS South-Asia Institute (SSAI) PhD conference, presenting at the Women's Spring conference at the University of Lancaster and participating in a round table discussion on women's safety in India on an international television channel. Most importantly, this has allowed me to bring my research and activism together and to create actual on-ground difference. Finally, my first book based on my PhD research titled Nirbhaya, New Media And Digital Gender Activism was also published by Emerald Publishing on 22nd August 2018.

I have been to India twice for my fieldwork- first for conducting a pilot study for 3 weeks in February 2018 followed by a 2 months fieldwork in July and August. In India, I interviewed not only noted academics and feminist activists whose works I have read and admired, but also had the opportunity to network extensively and build valuable relationships.

I want to thank Dr Navtej Purewal for believing in me and my work, Professor Michael Hutt and Professor Edward Simpson for their support and everyone at SSAI for their continued help. Finally, I want to thank British Academy for this wonderful opportunity.



“ These interactions positively resulted in academic discussions beyond my project as I further explored the possibilities of various academic collaborations. ”



The SOAS South Asia Institute, through the generous support of the Charles Wallace Trust, annually awards two visiting fellowships for a three-month long association with SOAS. These fellowships are awarded to one scholar each from India and Pakistan. It is awarded to those academics who are ready to make the most of a short period of study and discussion at SOAS. Applications are encouraged from those scholars who have had no or little opportunity to do research outside their countries.

VISITING SCHOLARS AT THE SSAI

SOAS Charles Wallace Pakistan Fellowship, 2017-2018: **Dr Nukhbah Taj Langah**

Research Title: *Siraiki Language speakers in Britain: An Ethnographic Approach*

Dr Nukhbah Taj Langah recounts her time as a CWT Visiting Fellow at SOAS:

Being a Charles Wallace Fellow during term III (April – June 2018) this year came as a surprise to me as I already had a wide experience of being educated in the UK. I had also received a partial CWT grant in the final year of my Ph.D. in 2008. Despite being able to use the SOAS library during my Ph.D. years at the University of Leeds (2004-8), it was a privilege to be able to work with the prestigious team of South Asia Institute at SOAS (SSAI) this year.

After joining SOAS, I received a warm welcome from both, Prof. Edward Simpson (Director, SSAI) and Dr. Navtej Purewal (Deputy Director, SSAI) during the first week of my visit. Sunil Pun (Executive Office, SSAI) coordinated with me and introduced me to the key spots and helped me register as Charles Wallace Fellow. I had been in touch with Mr. Tim Butchard (Secretary CWT Pakistan) for years and finally had a chance to meet him personally. We discussed the benefits of CWT for Pakistani students at a lunch organized by SSAI Director and Deputy Director during the first week of my arrival in London.

The most interesting aspect of my fellowship was exploring my methodological shift as a literature expert from literary research to ethnography. The title of my project was 'Siraiki Language speakers in Britain: An Ethnographic Approach'. My prior work on Siraiki ethnic and linguistic identity in Pakistan was based on the emergence of this identity in the early 1970s.

The major focus in my doctoral research (completed in 2009 at the University of Leeds and supervised by Dr. Ananya Jahanara Kabir) was on contemporary resistance poetry written in Siraiki. Whereas, this project at SOAS as a Charles Wallace Fellow was based on an ethnographic study to explore the ways in which first and second generations of Siraiki speakers have settled in Britain after 1947 while maintaining their connection with their ethnic and linguistic origins through their mother language (Siraiki). Furthermore, I explored what role the language has played in preserving Siraiki identity which, in some ways, challenges their British-Pakistani identity. As a Charles Wallace Fellow, I had the privilege of discussing the methodological experiences with experts like Professor Simpson and Dr. Purewal.

Their encouraging support was something that motivated me to complete the project in such a short span of time.

Other than my interaction with SSAI team, I was also introduced to Charles Wallace Fellow from India, Dr. Epsita Halder, SSAI faculty and other postgraduate students working with the SSAI team. I was impressed by the frequency of academic interactions organized by SSAI team with a focus on the diverse subject specializations of the faculty, PhD scholars, and guest speakers.

Social interactions beyond SOAS community primarily included the Siraiki diasporic community based in London, who contributed towards my primary data through one to one interviews that I had organized with them. In the later stages of my research, I could also connect with the Siraiki community residing in the other parts of England but we could only connect via phone.

In addition, during my stay in London, I was able to reconnect with my friends and colleagues who had worked closely with me during my academic years in the UK and with my academic mentors. These interactions positively resulted in academic discussions beyond my project as I further explored the possibilities of various academic collaborations.

As my project is a fresh effort towards exploring the identity concerns of Siraiki diasporic community, I had to make additional effort to find secondary sources.

VISITING SCHOLARS AT SSAI

For this purpose, in addition to the SOAS library, I was partly spending time at the British library to scan and collect some more sources related to my project.

As I have already spent a major part of my academic years in England, I was keen on reconnecting with my academic colleagues and spending time in libraries more than sightseeing.

I presented the initial draft of my paper at the Seminar organized by SSAI before my departure. This paper will be part of my next book project focusing on Siraiki identity. I felt, given the time constraint, I had gained a lot from my interaction and experience at SOAS. I must thank the SSAI and Charles Wallace Trust (Pakistan) team for providing me this excellent opportunity to expand my academic experience. The encouragement that I received from the SSAI team (particularly, Prof. Simpson and Dr. Purewal), colleagues at SSAI, and the cooperation by people who contributed towards the primary data for this research in such a short span of time are commendable. I truly hope that the end of this fellowship will not be an end to my lifelong connection with SOAS and the SSAI team.



SOAS Charles Wallace India Fellowship, 2017-2018:

Dr Epsita Halder

Dr Epsita Halder recounts her time as a CWT Visiting Fellow at SOAS:



It was a great honour for me to be selected as the Charles Wallace India Trust Visiting Fellow 2018 at South Asia Institute, SOAS, University of London and SSAI, I was extremely delighted to get an email from Professor Edward Simpson, Director, South Asia, Institute, SOAS, University of London SSAI, about my selection, which was immediately confirmed by Mr Richard Alford, Secretary, Charles Wallace Trust, through a formal letter. The visa letter, issued by the office of SSAI, followed immediately.

My three month-long tenure at SOAS started on May 3, 2018, but I visited SOAS a day before to attend a seminar about which Professor Simpson had already informed me over an e-mail. After the seminar, I introduced myself to Professor Simpson who extended me a very warm welcome to SOAS.

In my formal meeting with him the next day he briefed me about the fellowship and the academic activities of the SSAI. He suggested names of scholars I should meet during my stay, to discuss my work. He then introduced me to Sunil Pun, Executive Officer, SSAI, who gave me a tour around the campus and helped me get my library card and keys to the work space that I was assigned to share with my colleague, Nukhbah Lang, the Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust Fellow. I met Professor Navtej Purewal, Deputy Director, SSAI, in her office afterwards. Both Professor Simpson and Dr Purewal not only promised all possible help for my research at SOAS, they actually took out time to get updates on my work and discuss its possibilities. I want to thank both of them for making SOAS such a warm, positive and hospitable space for fellows from outside the UK.

I presented a seminar paper titled "Lamenting Online: Social Media and the Shia religiosity in Kolkata, West Bengal" on June 6 chaired by Dr Purewal where I got the opportunity to interact with many scholars too.

I was invited by Dr Purewal to present a paper at the UGC-UKIERI programme of SSAI, which was an intense two-day-long workshop on Critical Approaches to Social Sciences and Humanities Research, and also chaired a session as a part of the SSAI Annual PhD conference 'Approaching South Asia'. I also presented a paper on June 28 a paper was titled "Are There Shia Counterpublics Online in Kolkata?: Looking Beyond the Deliberation-versus-Disciplinary Framework" on June 28 and on June 30 chaired a PhD scholars' session on 'Rethinking Religious Practices on June 30'.

The library at SOAS was extremely helpful, where I was exposed to a plethora of rare and extremely useful secondary material. The availability of a wide range of books and their accessibility made my stay truly exciting and productive.

Along with working on my research project, I attended many seminars, talks and documentary screenings which were organized especially by SSAI and Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS (CCLPS). I am especially grateful to Professor Francesca Orsini for her kind support and encouragement as well as insightful comments on my work. She also allotted one of her classes as a part of the course titled "South Asia Literatures" to me to introduce my research work to MA students.

During my Charles Wallace Fellowship at South Asia Institute, SOASSAI, I also interacted with the research fellows and faculty members of SOAS and other universities in UK and abroad who were visiting London during my tenure.

I was also invited to present a paper on my research work as a part of the South Asia Seminar Series at the British Library and I presented a talk titled "Iswar/Allah: Translating the Qur'an into Bangla".

I received an invitation from the British Library project "Two Centuries of Indian Print" to present my paper on the theme 'Islam and Print' to be held on September 28, 2018. The title of my presentation was I will be speaking on "The Garden and the Fire: Hereafter in the Bengal Muslim Religious Imagination (late 19th-early 20th century)" in that proposed workshop.

I also took the opportunity to visit many museums and art galleries in London, including British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum, Tate Modern, Tate Britain and the National Gallery, which proved enriching beyond measure.

It would not have been possible for me to receive such vibrant academic exposure and build these diverse connections without support from Charles Wallace India Trust. I want to sincerely thank Mr Richard Alford, Secretary, Charles Wallace Trust, for his interest in my work and his continuous support.

Visiting Scholar from Presidency University Aparajita Chakraborty



I write this report on my last day at SOAS and this is a snippet of my time spent in this remarkable institution from May-August, 2018. I was here as a part of the Student Exchange Programme between Presidency University, Kolkata, India and SOAS University of London. My doctoral research brought me to one of the best academic institutions in the world and I am grateful to Presidency University and SOAS South Asia Institute for having me as a part of their 2018 Exchange Programme.

I was excited for this academic exchange as I was eager to learn and incorporate research ideas and suggestions from the professors and fellow researchers at SOAS. My experience has been wonderful and academically very enriching.

SOAS was home away from home and so was London. I didn't feel alone or left out right from the time I was here. Prof. Edward Simpson and Dr. Navtej Purewal have taken care of all that was required to welcome and accept a Visiting Scholar from abroad. I thank you both from the bottom of my heart.

I had the opportunity to access one of the best academic resources in the world, SOAS library. I was awestruck at their huge collection of books, journals, periodicals, archival material and digital library. I thank the library staff for their constant support and the IT personnel for fixing my laptop on the first day, without which I couldn't have worked so smoothly in the library and elsewhere.

Thank you Dr. Naomi Leite for making time out for me in spite of being on research leave, only to give an ear to my research idea and finally suggesting ways in which I could take it forward. Thank you Sunil Pun, Dr. Sanjukta Ghosh, Dr. Adrija Dey, Jonathan, Cloedia, Monica and Emily for being a big support during my stay in London. I thank all of you, who I met at the SSAI PhD Conference on 29th June, 2018. Thank you for your academic inputs and suggestions for my research paper and the research topic.

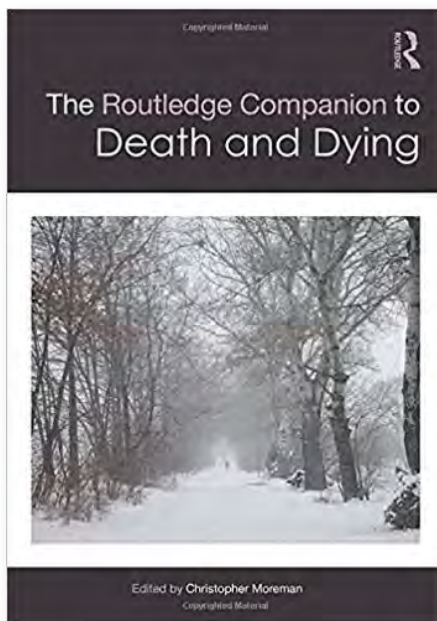
I would like to thank the entire SOAS community for making my stay so memorable through seminars, conferences, book launches, Iftar parties and live FIFA World Cup 2018 match telecasts at the JCR. Thank you all for being a global university in its truest sense.

I would also take this space as an opportunity to thank all the members of the British Library and their India Office Records in particular. My first chapter of the thesis would not have been possible without their resources and archival material. Their constant help and support is worth a mention.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Suhrita Saha, for believing in me and in my research idea. I also thank the teachers of Department of Sociology, Presidency University for their guidance. I thank my colleagues of Scottish Church College, Kolkata for that extra academic push. Thanking one's parents is never enough. It is because of them I exist. Their immense support and blessings have brought me here. I have a wonderful set of friends in India and in London, few express their excitement and love and some choose to silently support my work. I thank each one of them. And a final bow down to the Almighty for everything. I owe you huge, SOAS! I miss you already.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS BY SSAI SCHOLARS

Almut Hintze as part of the project 'The Multimedia Yasna' (MU YA) which investigates the Yasna, the core ritual of one of the most ancient and influential living religions, Zoroastrianism produced a full-length film of the Yasna ritual, and a film of the same ritual in Virtual Reality. She was awarded a Marie Curie Individual Fellowship for Yousef Moradi to work at SOAS on seals and sealings from Taxt-e Sulayman. She published a chapter titled 'Zoroastrian Afterlife Beliefs and Funerary Practices' for an edited volume on 'The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying'.

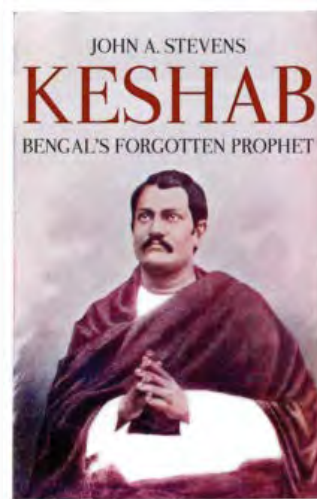


Amrita Shodhan presented a paper at the panel 'Connections between the Partitions of India and Mandate Palestine', Workshop on Partitions of the Middle East and South Asia, ISAS-MEI National University of Singapore, 15 August 2018, Singapore. She also published a paper titled 'Decolonising the Partition of British India, 1947' in *The Historian*.

Burzine Waghmar presented a series of lectures on the theme 'Pakistan at 70' lectures at the House of Lords, Senate House (London), the United Nations (Geneva), the Nehru Memorial Library (New Delhi). He also spoke on the theme of 'Balochistan and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor' at the Amnesty International (London), the United Nations Human Rights Council (Geneva), and at the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (Berlin). This past year he also provided policy briefings to the Institute of Defence Studies & Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi. He organised and spoke at the conference titled 'Reappraising Cultural Conduits and Commercial Centres along the Silk Road' at the K R Cama Oriental Institute (Mumbai).

Alessandra Mezzadri co-published two papers 'Classes of Labour' at the Margins of Global Commodity Chains in India and China and 'Health and Safety in Garment Workers' Lives: Setting a New Research Agenda'. At the Marx 200 conference in Patna she presented on Marx in the Sweatshop. At the Global Cotton Series she spoke on the Sweatshop Regime: Garments, Exploitation, and Labouring Bodies Made in India. She was also a speaker at the King's Transnational Law Summit.

John Stevens published a new monograph entitled 'Keshab: Bengal's Forgotten Prophet' with Hurst publishers in April 2018. The book is the first major historical study of the Bengali religious and social reformer Keshab Chandra Sen.



Philippe Cullet co-published 'Water Law in India – An Introduction to Legal Instruments' for the Oxford University Press. He published a chapter in the Routledge Handbook of Asian Law titled 'Water Law in India'. This past year, he wrote two articles for the journals *Stanford Journal of International Law* and *Water International*, alongwith an opinion piece for *The Independent*.

David Lunn published a transcription and translation of the *Syair Tabut*, a Malay-language narrative poem on Muharram in Singapore in 1864. He published a substantial article on the *Syair* and its setting (Indonesia and the Malay World; November 2017), alongwith another article titled 'Across the divide: Looking for the common ground of Hindustani'. He also co-authored a chapter with Katherine Butler Schofield in the book 'Monsoon Feelings' on a lost monsoon raga and the poetry of Emperor Shah Alam II.

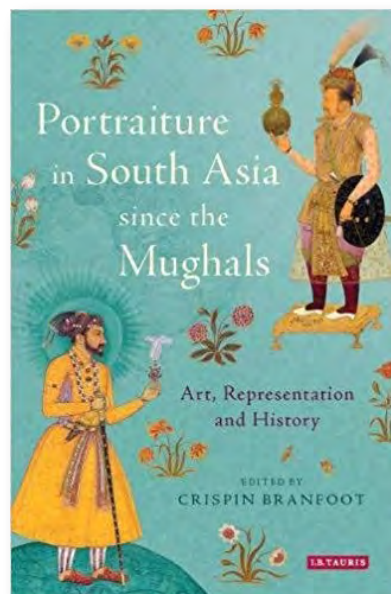
During the year he delivered lectures at the Leiden University (November 2017) and the British Library (April 2018) on Muharram in colonial-period South and Southeast Asia, and a conference paper at the *École Normale Supérieure* on strategies of Shi'a representation in May 2018.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS BY SSAI SCHOLARS

Suthaharan Nadarajah published a research article explaining Sri Lanka's proscription in 2014 of several Tamil diaspora groups as terrorist organisations and the unexpected responses by western governments to the bans for the journal *Terrorism & Political Violence*. He delivered a guest lecture in June 2017 at the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka on 'Sri Lanka and contemporary international order'. He also presented with David Rampton, Lecturer in World Politics at New College of the Humanities, their joint paper was titled 'Pacifism, Violence, Good Order and Struggle' at the UCSIA International Workshop, University of Antwerp in December, 2017.

Nigel Poole has continued to contribute to the DFID-funded programme Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in south Asia. He has had overall responsibility for the value chain work on agriculture and nutrition and this has been published in a Special Issue of *IDS Bulletin* under the title 'Introduction: Value chains for nutrition in South Asia: Who delivers nutritious foods, how and to whom?' He also prepared publications for a Special Issue of *Food Policy*, for which three co-authored articles have been published in the last year.

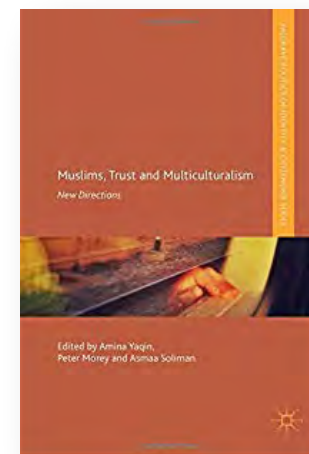
Crispin Branfoot participated in a symposium 'Rituals for Power: Rituals for Prosperity' at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München giving a paper on temple architecture and processions in Tamil south India. He returned to Germany in June to deliver a lecture at the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University ('Building Temples in the Tamil Renaissance: Colonial architecture and Chettiar Patronage in Madras Presidency 1880s-1920s'). His edited book 'Portraiture in South Asia since the Mughals: Art, Representation and History' was published in June 2018.



He is also a part of a research team with colleagues at Cardiff University, SPA Bhopal and DRONAH in New Delhi for a new 2-year project entitled 'Tamil Temple Towns: Conservation and Contestation' (2018-20) submitted to the AHRC/ICHR 'Cultural Heritage and Rapid Urbanisation' call, supported by the Newton Fund.

Stefanie Lotter alongwith Professor M. Hutt and a joint research project called 'After the Earth's Violent Sway' funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund through the Arts and Humanities Research Council. She published an article for the *Cambridge Scholars* on Khukuri knives in UK collections arguing that many should be considered for deaccessioning. She also wrote another article discussing political women elites in Nepal titled 'Gender Gap, Gender Trap: Negotiations of Intersectionality and Patriarchy amongst Women Elites in Nepal'.

Amina Yaqin co-edited a book on "published by Palgrave Macmillan. Her co-authored blog was featured by the British Film Institute on 'From the Empire's Archive: visualising the "Great Game" in Pakistan's hinterland' in July 2018. She delivered a keynote address on 'The Cultural Memory of Partition' at Jagiellonian University, Krakow in December 2017. Amina also delivered a keynote at the Decolonisation in Praxis conference at SOAS in June this year.



This past year she joined the editorial board of a new book series launched by Anthem Press, 'Anthem Studies in South Asian Literature, Aesthetics and Culture'. She is also a series editor of a new book series with Manchester University Press called 'Multicultural Textualities'. I spoke on Iqbal's relevance for the contemporary age at the International Muhammad Iqbal conference organised by Urdu Markaz and the Pakistan High commission in London in July.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS BY SSAI SCHOLARS

Fiona Buckee presented a talk on the topic 'The Curious Case of the Octagonal Temple: A Revised History of the Temples of Mundeshvari Hill' at The European Association of South Asian Archaeologists conference (Naples). Currently she is investigating the history of the temples built on Mundeshvari Hill in SW Bihar through a systematic analysis of the architectural fragments that lie around the hill top and the octagonal monument that stands today. She will be publishing her assessment and subsequent re-dating of the, and co-authoring a paper on the subject with Professor Adam Hardy that will include reconstructive drawings that piece together the architectural remains.

Wermer Menski wrote three chapters in edited volumes, and three forewords for books released in the last year. He also published a review article titled 'Religion, Governance and the Need for Plurality-Conscious Moderation' for the South Asia Research. He organised a book launch for Sonia Zaman Khan's 'The Politics and Law of Democratic Transition: Caretaker Government in Bangladesh'.

Naresh Sharma authored a textbook aimed at upper beginner and intermediate level Hindi language students titled 'The Hindi Tutor, Grammar and Vocabulary Workbook' published by Hodder.

Eleanor Newbiggin was invited at the end of October 2017 to speak at the international conference on 'India @ Seventy: building a more inclusive democracy', hosted by the Ahimsa Centre at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. She spoke about the history of measuring poverty in 1920s India to ask what late-colonial Indian economists can teach us about today's economic order. She was the academic discussant for an episode of the BBC 4 series Great Lives in which Nazir Afzal spoke about his interest in the life and work of M.K. Gandhi. In early June 2018 Eleanor and her fellow SOAS colleague Shabnum Tejani gave a public lecture on the history of partition for the Ilford Historical Society in Redbridge Library.

Navtej Purewal co-edited two journal special issues: 'Gendering (in)security in Contemporary States of Exception' with Sophia Dingli, *Third World Thematics*, Vol. 3 (2), 2018 and 'Gender, Violence and the Neoliberal State in India' with K. Wilson and J. Ung Loh *Feminist Review*, Issue. 119. She has two other articles recently on gender and neoliberal patriarchy in the journals *Feminist Review* and *South Asian Diaspora*.



The Curious Case of the Octagonal Temple: A Revised History of the Temples of Mundeshvari Hill



TRAVEL

This year we visited Habib University in Karachi, and Jawaharlal Nehru University, the Centre for Policy Research and Shiv Nadar University in Delhi. We also had reciprocal visits with Ahmedabad University and students visiting from Presidency University in Kolkata. We hosted delegations from InfoSys, IIM Indore and Lahore College for Women University among others. We signed an MoU with the Tata Institute of Social Science to encourage faculty and student exchange, having visited the campus in Mumbai for numerous different reasons over the course of the year.

Mark Coddington, SOAS International Officer, engages with students on the TISS Campus Mumbai



Meeting to sign the MoU between TISS and SOAS



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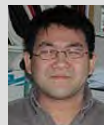
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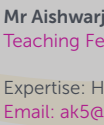
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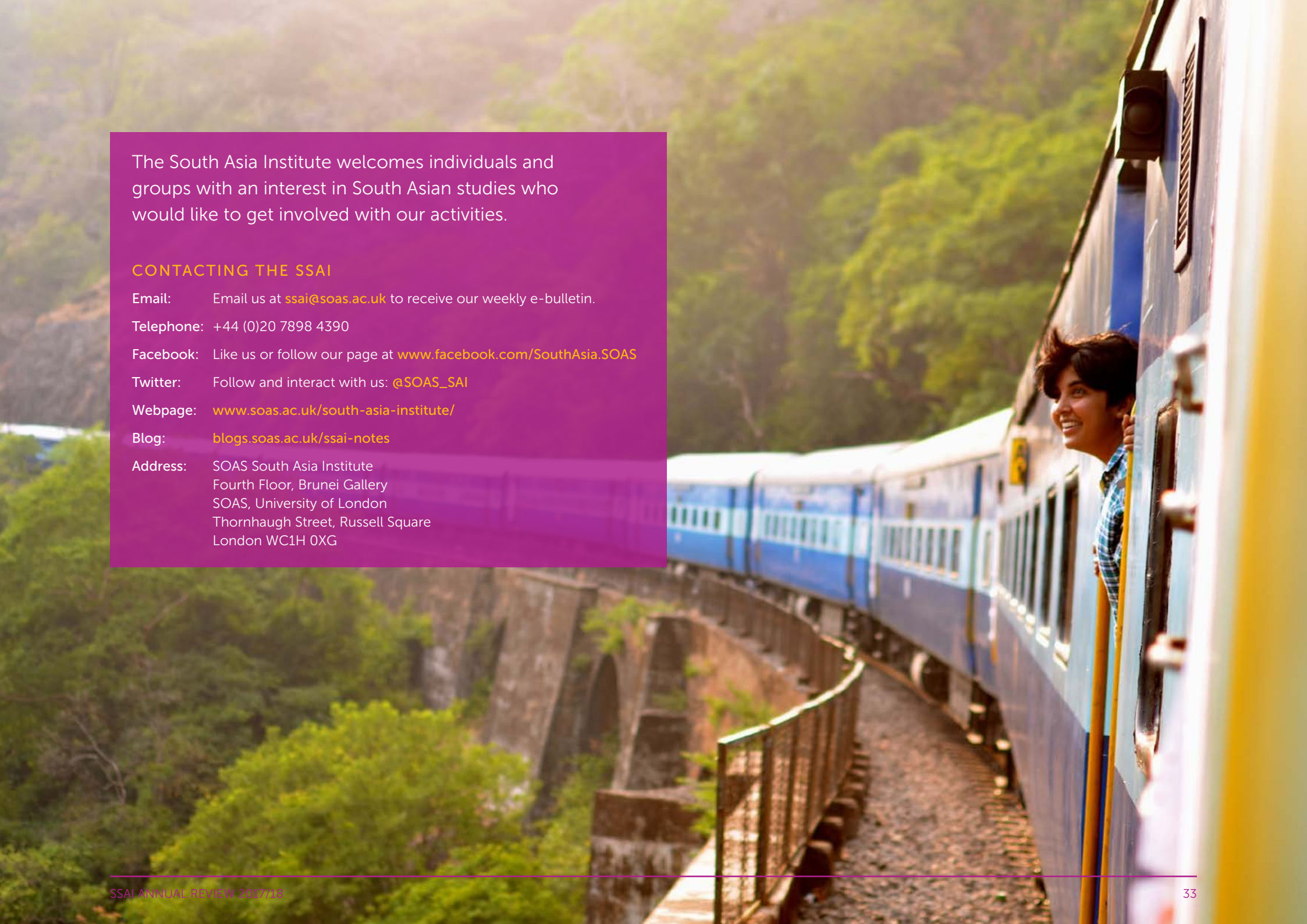
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