

UK and India

Audio slide show transcription

Narrator:

The UK and India have links that are historic, cultural, economic and social. A recent showcase event in New Delhi highlighted research projects that have captured these shared experiences. Appropriately enough it was called 'Jalsa' which means 'celebration'.

Supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council the work examines many aspects of a legacy that is providing ongoing mutual benefits. Dr Nandini Das from the University of Liverpool is looking at India and the Middle East in the 16th and 17th centuries:

Dr Nandini Das:

This is a particularly interesting period of time because so many of the pre-conceptions that we tend to associate with the colonial period hadn't really been established at this point and there's a genuine sense of both perhaps confusion and misunderstanding on one part, on part of both the countries and representatives of both countries, but also genuine communication and a need and wish really to understand the two different cultures, which is particularly in tune with the general interest in both countries now. So there are lots of parallels I think which I'd quite like to excavate.

Narrator:

Nandini's work is funded by an AHRC Fellowship which she says has given her not only the time for the detailed archive research involved in tracing travellers and ships and the networks of connections between people, in addition she says it has opened up new opportunities:

Dr Nandini Das:

Part of it also involves being able to communicate that research to the general audience outside academia. Part of the AHRC support that I have also been involved in is the AHRC's collaboration with the BBC. They have set up recently a scheme called the 'New Generation Thinkers' and as a part of that I'm involved in creating programmes for the BBC.

Narrator:

This research is one of many areas featured in a new AHRC publication that was launched at the Jalsa event. It's called "The UK and India – a partnership for Research'. Another project featured involves Professor Susheila Nasta and Dr Florian Stadler from the Open University. They are looking at the History of the Indian Presence in Britain. This has included a touring exhibition called 'Beyond the Frame'. It concentrated on the role of South Asians within British Society from 1858 to 1950.

Dr Florian Stadler:

We wanted to highlight really that this history of the early Asian experience in Britain is not a niche history but that it's actually a fundamental part of the island's story,

whether you think about the suffragette movement, whether you think about Britain's so called 'Finest Hour' in World War II or whether you think about it in terms of influencing policy in Parliament. I think that was a very important thing to bring across to not only a British-Asian audience but also to a wider white British audience.

Professor Susheila Nasta:

Above all we developed, as the title suggests 'Beyond the Frame', not only a way of thinking about those orthodox histories differently, it's also to do with the depth we had beyond those frames which was the archival research, which was supported by digital networks, digital database, a digital site at the British Library, school workshops in India and an exhibition tour. There's been a response at the highest level from the Foreign Office to schools in India and public audiences.

Narrator:

Dr Jerri Daboo from the University of Exeter is examining the cultural history of Southall in West London. She says with the funding from AHRC they have been able to set up a variety of activities. For instance pupils at Featherstone High School designed a coat of arms for Southall and collected oral history recordings:

Dr Jerri Daboo:

The school children actually went and interviewed their parents and grandparents about their stories of migration and then posted those up on a blog. The school also organised a web competition to design a new coat of arms for Southall. So they got in a history class as they researched how coats of arms are formed and then the school children went away and drew up their own that represented how they felt Southall was today.

Narrator:

Completely new research ground is being covered by Dr Nicolas Magriel through the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and a project called 'Growing into Music'. This looks at children in six countries including India. Nicolas has been working with North Indian classical musicians and Rajastani folk musicians. Involving around 25 families, Nicolas has been watching the children's progress over a three year period. It's providing insight into how music traditions are passed on from one generation to the next.

Dr Nicola Magriel:

The output of this project is mainly video but we'll also be putting out a jointly authored book. People look at finished music, what you buy on CDs or see on the stage, but even in India people know very little about what happens behind the scenes, behind closed doors in the houses of musicians.

Narrator:

You can find out about these and other projects in the AHRC publication 'the UK and India- a partnership for research'.