



SOUTH ASIA
INSTITUTE

SOAS University of London



SSAI Annual Review
2016/17

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



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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this Review of the events of 2016-17.

The past year was only the second complete academic year of the SSAI's existence: I took up the position of Director in January 2014, and the Institute was formally launched in May 2015. I remember setting out its primary aims at the launch. First, I said, we would produce the next generation of South Asia scholars in the SOAS tradition. Second, we would share our regional expertise with a wider range of stakeholders. Third, we would strengthen our relationships with institutions of higher learning in India, Pakistan and the other countries of South Asia.

As we look back over the past year, I think we can claim substantial achievements in each of these areas. We have, I believe, both enhanced and promoted the very distinctive way in which SOAS scholars, teachers, researchers and students engage with this tumultuous, fascinating, challenging part of the world.

I am writing this from the city of Lalitpur in Nepal, where I am now on research leave, having completed my term of office as the SSAI's first Director last April. I will remain forever grateful to everyone, from within SOAS and beyond, who supported Dr Tej Purewal and myself as we worked to build this new Institute; Tej herself was nothing less than a joy to work with. I was delighted, not to say hugely relieved, when Professor Ed Simpson agreed to take over this role from me as my term neared its end. I wish him, all members of the South Asia Institute, and all the friends we have made and are making in the wider world, every success for the future.

Michael Hutt




The academic year 2016/17 was a momentous one for SOAS and the South Asia Institute. It allowed us to reflect on the past through the lens of the present while also looking ahead to the future.

This year saw the departure of our founding Director, Michael Hutt, whose wisdom and efforts over the past three years to establish the SSAI on such firm footing are deeply appreciated. On behalf of the community of SSAI members, I extend much gratitude to Mike for his hard work in setting up the SSAI. We wish him all the best as he embarks on his extremely topical and engaging new research project in Nepal.

2016/2017 marked 100 years of SOAS since its establishment in 1916. The SSAI contributed to the commemoration of SOAS' centenary through a number of events and activities which will be highlighted in this report, including a high-profile panel on diplomacy chaired by our Director Valerie Amos in Delhi, two conferences on History and Heritage in South Asia, one at SOAS and the other at Presidency University in Kolkata, and a music concert 'South Asian Sound' featuring highly accomplished musicians associated with SOAS either as teachers or current/former students held in collaboration with the SOAS Music department.

2017 also marked the 70th anniversary of the Partition which was commemorated in contemplative, critical, and reflective SOAS-style. Rather than holding a conference or panel on the theme of the Partition as a historical event, we organised several events which addressed themes associated with the Partition and delved into the depths of on-going hegemonies

and multiple modes of connections. This was done through seminars and talks, a mushaira-style poetry evening with recitations in different South Asian languages, as well as a border-crossing music concert which extended the contemporary and historical sonic reflections of borders from Maharashtra to Lahore to Delhi to Iran through the lyrics of Sufi saints and Dalit activists. Moving onto 2017/18, the upcoming year promises to highlight a range of South Asia-related activities. We look forward to continuing our engagement with our members, university partners in South Asia, and others who share our interest in promoting the SSAI as a platform for measured and thought-provoking debate and discussion about South Asia at SOAS.

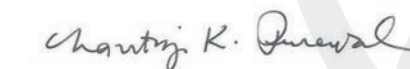
The academic year 2016/17 was a momentous one for SOAS and the South Asia Institute. It allowed us to reflect on the past through the lens of the present while also looking ahead to the future. This year saw the departure of our founding Director, Michael Hutt, whose wisdom and efforts over the past three years to establish the SSAI on such firm footing are deeply appreciated. On behalf of the community of SSAI members, I extend much gratitude to Mike for his hard work in setting up the SSAI. We wish him all the best as he embarks on his extremely topical and engaging new research project in Nepal.

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On a final note, the SSAI does not exist without our members and also the dedication of the Centres and Programmes Office. I would like to especially thank the C&PO office manager Jane Savory, who went on maternity leave to give birth to a gorgeous baby girl named Lola, Raghav Kishore, and Kunal Purohit (MSc Development Studies 2016-17) who, after leading the SOAS India student society worked for a few months with the SSAI as executive officer. We are fortunate to have such dynamic people working with us to promote the work of the SSAI.



Navtej Purewal, Deputy Director

The Bishwa Bangla Scholarships

SSAI's stated aim of making learning accessible to an ever-growing number of students received a major boost when the Government of West Bengal announced the Bishwa Bangla scholarships for West Bengal students to come to SOAS for postgraduate study. These scholarships were awarded to three students, one PhD student and two Masters students.

These scholarships have been extended by yet another year and now, are available for two students who wish to come to SOAS to study on the MA South Asia Area Studies, starting September 2018.

The UKIERI-UGC Research Methods Node Project

The SOAS South Asia Institute has embarked on an exciting collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai for a three-year long project. The collaboration which is led by SOAS and TISS involves three other partner universities: Panjab University, Chandigarh; Presidency University, Kolkata; and South Asian University, New Delhi.

The project, funded by a thematic scheme under the UK-India Educational Research Initiative (UKIERI) and University Grants Commission (UGC), aims to develop a research

methods node which will, ultimately, develop into a network of excellence in the social sciences and humanities.

Launch of a New Research Project: 'After The Earth's Violent Sway'

Outgoing SSAI director Professor Mike Hutt and SSAI academic member Stefanie Lotter initiated a three-year long project which aims to document and analyse the cultural and political impacts of Nepal's 2015 earthquakes.

The project, titled 'After The Earth's Violent Sway: The Tangible and Intangible Legacies of A Natural Disaster', began on 1st April 2017. It received £576,419 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for this 3-year investigation.

The project will examine post-earthquake cultural and political discourse in Nepal. Second, the project asks who it is that decides which elements of an aid-dependent country's destroyed physical heritage are worth restoring. Third, the project draws historical comparison between the sociocultural and political impacts of the 2015 quakes and those that struck Nepal during earlier periods of political and cultural transition in 1833 and 1934. Prof Hutt is the Principal Investigator while Dr Lotter is a Co-Investigator on this project.



New SOAS Institute of Zoroastrian Studies

SOAS University of London has received a £5 million donation to create the SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies, dedicated to curating and bringing out new research, enhancing the teaching and learning of one of the oldest religions in the world.



The institute will be co-chaired by SSAI academic Dr Sarah Stewart, a Lecturer in Zoroastrianism, along with another SSAI academic Professor Almut Hintze FBA, Zartoshty Brothers Professor of Zoroastrianism. Dr Stewart will also hold the Shapoorji Pallonji Lectureship in Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS in the Department of the Study of Religion. Along with this, the

donation will also see the creation of Shapoorji Pallonji Scholarships in Zoroastrian Studies.

'Drugs and (Dis)order': Jonathan Goodhand awarded £7 million grant for a project on war and drugs
Professor Jonathan Goodhand, Professor in Conflict and Development



of the world's largest drug-producing countries-Afghanistan, Colombia and Myanmar-to build a research base that helps transform illicit economies. Led by Prof Goodhand, the project is a research consortium made up of members from various other academic and non-academic institutions.

Bhavani Shankar part of a £5 million investigation into sustainable food systems

Professor of International Food, Agriculture and Health Bhavani Shankar's collaborative project on food systems has received a major £5 million grant from the Wellcome Trust. Titled 'Sustainable and Healthy Food Systems', the project will involve Dr Bhavani Shankar, as a co-applicant, researching sustainable food systems, healthy diets and the impact of environmental and population changes on food production. This project hopes to help guide policy-makers deliver healthy food systems in the face of environmental and demographic changes.

Ulrich Pagel is awarded grant for mapping the history of verbs in the Tibetan Language

Dr Ulrich Pagel, Reader in the Languages and Religions of Tibet and Central Asia (Department of Religions and Philosophies) and an SSAI member, received a £792,550

grant for a project mapping the history of verbs in the Tibetan language. He was awarded the grant by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) from the Global Challenges Research Fund for his project, titled 'Lexicography in Motion: A History of the Tibetan Verb'. The project seeks to create a web-based lexicon of Tibetan verbs that allow the user to infer the complete structure of a sentence, based primarily on verbs and the accompanying arguments.

The project commenced on 1 February 2017 and will run for 36 months.

Peter Flügel awarded £284,000 grant on Jaina Prosopography

Dr Peter Flügel, Reader in the Study of Religions and the Chair of the Centre of Jaina Studies, was awarded £284,410 grant for a project which explores the relationship between Jaina mendicant lineages and their supporters. Titled 'Jaina Prosopography: Monastic Lineages, Networks and Patronage', the project focusses on the nexus of monastic recruitment, geographical circulation of monks and nuns, their biographies and literary production and the patronage of mendicant-inspired religious ventures.

Dr Flügel was awarded this 3-year grant by the Leverhulme Trust.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

The SOAS University of London celebrated 2016-17 as the year of its centenary anniversary. SOAS received its Royal Charter in June 1916 and admitted its first students in January 1917. The celebrations saw a wide-range of events being held to commemorate it.

The Past Before Us: Heritage and History in South Asia September 2016

As part of the SOAS centenary celebrations, the SOAS South Asia Institute (SSAI) partnered with Presidency University, Kolkata, by organising a two-tier cross-disciplinary conference. The theme of the conferences was 'The Past Before Us: Heritage and History in South Asia'. One was held in SOAS in September 2016 and the other, held in Presidency in January 2017.



The conferences brought together range of scholars from places as diverse as India, Europe, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the US and Singapore, to conceptualise what heritage is, explore the link between global and local heritage and analyse the contested politics around heritage in the region.

In Kolkata, for the second tier of the conference, SOAS Director Baroness Valerie Amos addressed the conference and participated in Presidency's bicentenary celebrations. Accompanying her were SSAI Director Michael Hutt and SSAI Deputy Director Navtej Purewal.

South Asian Sounds June 7, 2017

The SSAI, in collaboration with the Department of Music, brought sounds of South Asia to SOAS. The evening featured four traditional South Asian instruments-the Afghan rubab, the sitar, the sarod and the tabla. Three recent Indian graduates of the Music department, Jasdeep Singh (sitar),

William Rees Hofmann (rubab and sarod), Gurchetan Singh (tabla) performed along with renowned tabla maestro Sanju Sahai. They left the audience mesmerised and asking for more.



The Past Before Us

September 5 & 6, 2016

The SOAS South Asia Institute hosted a confluence of conversation, poetry and music to celebrate the theme 'The Past Before Us'. These three events converged with the 'Heritage & History in South Asia', a two-day conference being hosted by SOAS which explored the place of 'heritage' in South Asia's local and global futures. The theme, as the range of events at SOAS on September 5 & 6 showed, can be seen through various prisms.

Indian Historian Romila Thapar delivered the keynote lecture Prof Thapar, also an alumna and Honorary Fellow of SOAS, delivered a keynote lecture titled 'Past Cultures as the heritage of the present'. Her lecture, revolving around the intricate interconnections between heritage and history, left a packed Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre audience stimulated, brimming with questions. Prof Thapar's lecture touched upon various issues that shape contemporary life and politics. Is heritage permanent? Who is selecting what heritage is to be highlighted and why?



250 Years of Waris Shah's Heer: 2016 marked the 250 years to Waris Shah' masterpiece 'Heer' which tells the tragic story of Heer and her lover 'Ranjha'. The SSAI organised a panel discussion to commemorate this by discussing the continuing relevance of the alternative spiritual vision outlined in the story as well the challenges that it offered to the place of social hierarchies in society. The discussion also revolved around Waris Shah's life and the various interpretations around Heer.



Madan Gopal Singh & Chaar Yaar: The Faqiri Quartet: Madan Gopal Singh, a Sufi Musician, along with his ensemble 'Chaar Yaar'

performed their original rendition of 'Heer' to mark this occasion. The Past maintained a constant presence through the evening as they performed compositions of poets from the past, like Rumi and Kabir and in the process, displaying their continuing relevance.

The Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Lecture:

This year, the SOAS South Asia Institute launched an annual lecture series in memory of Noor Inayat Khan. Through the generous support by the Noor Inayat Khan Trust, the lecture series will celebrate the principles Noor stood for.

The First Annual Lecture: The Struggle For Human Rights by Vrinda Grover

Indian advocate Vrinda Grover delivered the first NIK annual lecture. Vrinda is a renowned lawyer, researcher and activist who has focused unflinchingly on fighting to defend human rights. Vrinda has been actively engaged with human rights, including women's rights in India, and gave a moving and inspiring public lecture. Not surprising, then, that a cold London welcomed Vrinda warmly, with the Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, the biggest venue that SOAS offers, packed to its capacity.

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.





OTHER EVENTS

Thiruvalluvar Celebration Day

Date: May 13, 2017

SSAI held a day-long commemoration of the legendary Tamil Poet Thiruvalluvar. SOAS has a well-loved Thiruvalluvar statue, right outside of the main campus gates which has become an important symbol of SOAS to all visitors to the campus. This occasion saw, fittingly, the launch of the SOAS Tamil Studies Campaign, which reflected on a historical presence of Tamil language teaching and history in academic teaching at SOAS. Padma Shree Dr John Marr gave an enlightening talk about his own research and teaching of Tamil spanning decades.

The day also saw translations of Thiruvalluvar's poetry and a recitation of the Thirukkural, a classic Tamil text consisting of couplets which deals with everyday virtues that an individual must possess, along with splendid performances of Bharathanatyam, a form of classical dance that originated in Tamil Nadu, by students of the Bharatiya Vidhya Bhawan.

The day ended with a panel discussion on reflections of Tamil communities in the UK and language, chaired and moderated by SOAS academics Dr. Meera Sabaratnam (Politics and International Studies) with Professor Michael Hutt, and representatives from several Tamil organisations.

India and UK Trade Relations: What Future after Brexit?

Date: October 26, 2017

Months after the UK's referendum results, the SOAS South Asia Institute hosted a well-attended panel discussion on how this would shape the relationship the India and the UK share. The discussion saw four panellists-India's Deputy High Commissioner in the UK Dinesh Patnaik, Author and Journalist John Elliot, SOAS Economics Professor Pasquale Scaramozzino and UK Country Director of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Pratik Dattani.





OTHER EVENTS (CONTINUED)



Book Launch: 'Roots of Yoga' by James Mallinson and Mark Singleton
Date: April 24, 2017

The SOAS South Asia Institute launched the book 'Roots of Yoga' authored jointly by two SOAS faculty members, James Mallinson and Mark Singleton.

The book is an extensive collection of translations of Yoga manuals, drawn

from diverse texts, regions and periods. James is a Senior Lecturer in Sanskrit and Classical Indian Civilisation at SOAS while Mark is a Senior Research Fellow in the department of Languages and Cultures of South Asia at SOAS. The evening was hosted in collaboration with Yoga Campus and included a discussion with Mukti Jain Campion, from CultureWise.

Reclaiming Azaadi, 70 years on
Date: 11 May 2017

A mushaira was organised as a creative and critical reflection on the 70th year of the Partition of the 'sub-continent', SSAI along with SOAS Decolonising our Minds Society and Sangat, hosted a Spoken Word evening, reflecting

critically on the exclusions that have stemmed from colonisation and the supposed decolonisation.

The event was an inspiring evening of a range of different types of poetry revolving around the cultural politics of the partition which continues to circulate in South Asia and its diaspora communities.

Wither, Free India? A Talk By Journalist Paranjoy Guha Thakurta
Date: June 2, 2017

SSAI hosted a talk by the then Editor of the Economic and Political Weekly, Paranjoy Guha Thakurta on the diminishing editorial independence and freedom of expression in the Indian media. His talk focussed on the changes

in the media landscape and the tightening of political control over the media, especially after the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power.

Thakurta has an experience of over four decades in journalism across print, radio, television and documentary cinema. The evening also saw a screening of Thakurta's documentary, 'Freedom Song'.

Feminist Historian Uma Chakravarti's talk & Documentary Screening:
June 19, 2017

Indian feminist historian, human rights activist and film-maker Uma Chakravarti was an SSAI guest for a very special evening, where we exhibited one of her documentaries, 'Lucknow 1949', a documentary which was set in Firangi Mahal, an institution created for radical Islamic scholarship founded in the late 17th century.

The documentary, through two protagonists, spoke about the little-known stories of struggles by women to find their own ways of being, in times of changes.

The evening also saw a free-wheeling discussion between Uma and the audience, revolving around the documentary as well as her work in general.



a. PhD symposium: Gender, Consent and Culture in Contemporary India

The symposium, facilitated by SSAI and the SOAS Centre for Gender Studies, was organised to discuss perspectives around political economy, class, gender violence, law and the notion of 'consent'. Two students presented their doctoral research: Shilpi Singh, a visiting scholar from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), and Anisha Thomas, a Gender Studies PhD student at SOAS.

b. South Asia in London: Student trip to Southall

The SSAI organised a study trip to Southall with a group of Master's students studying South Asia. The trip entailed a tour of selected sites guided by a long-standing community arts activist. Students learned about the background of South Asian community formation in Southall and its rich social and political history.

c. SSAI Goes To Its Alumni:

SOAS and SSAI decided to take its Centenary celebrations to its alumni in India. In collaboration with the Society for Policy Studies (SPS), SSAI Director Michael Hutt and Deputy Director Dr Navtej Purewal organised the event held at the Lalit Hotel in Delhi. The

event was provocatively titled 'Is Diplomacy Dead?' and was a unique platform to not only engage in issues that face the world of international relations but also give SOAS faculty and its alumni an opportunity to interact. The panel was chaired by SOAS Director Baroness Valerie Amos, British Deputy High Commissioner in New Delhi and SOAS Alumnus Alexander Evans OBE, Former Permanent Representative of India to the UN Hardeep Singh Puri and the Director of SPS, C. Uday Bhaskar. The panellists expressed their opinions on the various challenges that traditional diplomacy faces and its continuing relevance or the lack of it.



Student scholarships:

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 Michael Palin Scholarship:

Michael Palin CBE, the veteran actor broadcaster and an Honorary Fellow at SOAS, in his generosity has decided to initiate a scholarship to fund one student's tuition fees for the entire duration of the 2-year MA in Intensive South Asian Studies programme. The scholarship was initiated this year and we are very happy to announce that Mr Palin has decided to continue the scholarship for the year 2017-'18 as well.

This MA offers students the opportunity to develop fluencies in South Asia language and culture alongside advanced training in an academic discipline. It also gives students the opportunity to spend a semester at a partner university in South Asia after having spent a year at SOAS.



The Bishwa Bangla Scholarships:

This year also saw an exciting collaboration between SOAS and the Government of West Bengal, India. The Government will be funding the complete tuition fees for several students, residing in West Bengal, to enable them to pursue an MA in South Asian Area Studies that SOAS offers. These scholarships started in September 2017.

The Noor Inayat Khan Dissertation Prize:

Just as we believe that it is crucial to make our education accessible to all, we also believe that it is equally crucial to reward excellence in our students. The Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust has helped us make this possible: Since 2015, an annual prize of £1000 has been given to any Masters student in the field of History, Gender Studies and South Asian Studies. This year, the prize was presented to Natasha Pagarani, an MA South Asian studies student who focused on the Mental Healthcare Bill, 2017, that was passed by the Indian Parliament, which removes personal liberties, especially for women. The prize was presented to Pagarani on the evening of the Noor Inayat Khan Annual delivered by Vrinda Grover.

The courses:

MSc Contemporary India

The MSc Contemporary India Studies degree offers a critical, study of present day India. The programme takes an

interdisciplinary approach and provides analytical training. Students can choose to study contemporary India topics, issues and challenges in the following subjects: anthropology, art, cinema, culture, development studies, history, economics, law, literature, politics, religions and languages, to name a few.

The MSc Contemporary India Studies programme:

- introduces students to recent topics, methods and debates in the study of India
- prepares students at an advanced level to pursue research interests
- allows students to opt in for language training in Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi and Urdu
- gives students exposure to a dynamic schedule of events and seminars throughout the year organised by the SSAI which attracts renowned speakers and scholars not only from India but also internationally.

MA Intensive South Asian Studies:

The two-year MA Intensive South Asian Studies offers comprehensive language-based training across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

Students spend their first year at SOAS, during which time they study a language

module at an appropriate level in Bengali, Hindi, Nepali or Urdu and the core module 'The Politics of Culture in Contemporary South Asia'. In addition to the two core modules, students must choose modules from a wide list of optional modules from different disciplines including Anthropology, Art and Archaeology, Media, Cinema, Cultural and Regional Studies, Economics, History, Law, Literature, Music, Politics, and Study of Religions.

In their second year, students undertake an extended period of study attached to a university or research institute in India, Pakistan or Nepal (the location depending on their choice of language), where they will further develop their language proficiency and conduct research for an extended dissertation. The second half of the second year will be taken up with the writing of the dissertation under close supervision back in London.

The programme is aimed at students looking to acquire a skill set which encompasses disciplinary rigour, comprehensive area knowledge and cultural and linguistic fluencies. No prior knowledge of a South Asian language is required but applicants should provide evidence of their language-learning ability. The language element of the training will be tailored to meet the needs of students with existing language skills.

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 SSAI THE CHARLES WALLACE TRUST FELLOWSHIPS, 2016-2017



SOAS Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust Fellowship, 2016-2017:

Dr Sarah Umer

Research Title:

'Study of the cuneiform tablets with reference to religion of indus valley civilisation'

Dr Sarah Umer recounts her time as a CWT Visiting Fellow at SOAS:

I was awarded my PhD degree in March 2016 on the topic 'Review of The Indus Valley Religious Beliefs - Through Analytical Study of Seals & Artefacts and Comparative Study of Contemporary Religions.' During my research, I realized that conducting research in Pakistan was not an easy task because of limited resources. Many questions that I had during my study remained unanswered, yet I was determined to look for them.

The advertisement for fellowship at SOAS was like a window of opportunity

for me to find those answers that remained unaddressed during my study. I reached SOAS around mid-January, leaving behind my three children and husband for the first time in my life for this long a period, only to find that this was not an ideal time of year to visit London.

The first few weeks were cold, difficult and lonely but the hospitality and warmth of Jane Savory and Yasmin not only helped me to survive but I knew that I could depend on them in times of need. After the first few weeks, London with its abundant resources became a place of pleasure. I would visit the library and meet relevant resource persons during the week days and would explore the various museums during the weekends.

Guidance from people like Andrew George, Mark Weeden, Theodore Proferes and Peter Flügel helped me in identifying my scope of further study, while Michael Hutt, Navtej, Amina Yaqin and James Caron were always there to help. James also made it possible for me to attend a few postgraduate classes of Religion and Global Politics that he was co teaching with Sian Hawthorne. I thoroughly enjoyed the interactive sessions and discussions during the classes, even though the one thing I found missing at SOAS was faculty working on the Indus Valley civilization.

During my stay, I was to do one seminar at SOAS, but I took the opportunity to present two more papers within this time span. One was at Oxford University in the Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies held in March on 'The Importance of Religion in the Life of the Indus Man' and the other at the Seventh International Conference on Religion and Spirituality in Society held at Imperial College London on 'The Documented Monotheistic Religious Contemporaries of the Indus Valley Civilization' during April. All these sessions were followed by valuable comments and questions answers. All

this made it possible for me to meet people relevant to my subject area.

My three months at SOAS, which in the beginning seemed a lot just flew by very quickly. I think by the time I was fully into the flow of my research, it was time to go back leaving a craving in me for so much more to explore. Nevertheless, I think my time at SOAS gave me a clear direction towards further research and has opened new avenues for me. And last but not the least, I am so very grateful to the Charles Wallace Trust for giving me this opportunity to explore the diverse treasures of London.



(Dr Sarah Umer is an Assistant Professor at the Lahore College for Women University, Pakistan)



(Dr Khalid Wasim Hassan is an Assistant Professor at the Central University of Kashmir, Srinagar)

SOAS Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship, 2016-2017:

Dr Khalid Wasim Hassan

Research Title:

'Hamams of mosques for public discussion: in search of public sphere in the armed conflict'

Dr Khalid Hassan recounts his time as a CWT Visiting Fellow at SOAS:

It was a great honour for me to be selected for the Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship 2017 at South Asia Institute, SOAS, University of London. Mr Richard Alford (Secretary, Charles

Wallace Trust) sent me a formal letter of this prestigious award.

I arrived at London, Heathrow Airport on 21 January and then took a train to Russell Square. While coming out of the tube station at Russell Square, I was trying to figure out the directions to International Lutheran Student's Centre. A gentleman driving a taxi asked me if I needed help. As I told him about the address, he took my luggage in his taxi and dropped me to the exact address without charging any money. When I insisted on paying him, he replied with a smiling face that it was a

short distance-Welcome to London.

On 23 January I met Jane Savory (Manager, Centres and Programmes office) and Yasmin Jayesemi (Executive Officer) at the SOAS South Asia Institute (SSAI). Jane briefed me about the fellowship at SSAI and Yasmin gave me a tour of the various departments at SOAS, the Library and to the office space which I would share with my colleague, the Charles Wallace Fellow from Pakistan. I met Professor Michael Hutt, SSAI Director its deputy director Dr Navtej Purewal in their respective offices and they promised me all possible help for my research project at SOAS. Professor Michael Hutt was kind enough to put me in touch with the faculty members from other Centres who work on similar themes as I was working.

The discussions with Dr Navtej Purewal on the issues of Nationalism, Boundary Issues in South Asia and Self-determination Movement in Kashmir proved to be very useful for my research. She not only guided me in my research but also helped me to develop connections with research scholars from other universities in UK. It was on her advice that I decided to transform my research finding on the public sphere in Kashmir into a research article for publication. The library at SOAS was great help to me and thanks to Ms Farzana Whitfield who helped me to locate the resources in the

South Asian Studies section of Library. Apart from working on my research project, I attended many seminars, talks, documentary screening which were organized by various departments and students' groups. To my utmost happiness I discovered a student's group called Kashmir Solidarity Network which has been active in SOAS for some years now and it is this group which makes students aware about the self-determination movement in Kashmir and Human Rights Abuses by State through various programmes.

I also came across researchers from the other side of Kashmir (Mirpur) and it was nice to listen the stories from across Line of Control. On March 15th, 2017, I presented a seminar on "Public Sphere in Conflict Zones: Emerging Alternative Public Space in Conflict Zone of Kashmir" which was chaired by Dr. Navtej Purewal. I really appreciate the interest of faculty members and MA and PhD students with which they engaged with my presentation. During my fellowship period I stayed at International Lutheran Student's Centre where I enjoyed long debates with students and scholars on various socio-political issues across the world.

During my Charles Wallace Fellowship at SOAS, I interacted with faculty members of other Universities in the UK, presented papers in two seminars, and travelled to other places..

I visited many museums of London, including the British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum (At the V&A, I went to the South Asian Gallery where there are artefacts, clothes, shawls and weapons from different regions and periods of South Asia. I was personally amazed to see the Kashmiri Pashmina Shawl which was made by Kashmiri artisans in late 18th century and gifted to then Maharaja of Kashmir).

It would not have been possible for me to have all these academic exercises without the support which I received from Charles Wallace India Trust, British Council India and the South Asia Institute, SOAS. I want to thank Mr Richard Alford from Charles Wallace Trust for his continuous support during my stay at SOAS and Ms Sakshi Sharma from British Council India to help me in the initial stages of visa and travel.

I want also sincerely thank Professor Michael Hutt and Dr Navtej Purewal from South Asia Institute for their intellectual support, and Jane Savory and Yasmin Jayesemi for making my stay comfortable at SOAS.



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I have got to know 'the School' (as we call it) well. Building on this knowledge and experience, I look forward to new partnerships and alliances across South Asia, getting to know new people, exploring new avenues for teaching and research, and, perhaps most importantly, maintaining what is already in place.

The study of South Asia has been core to the SOAS mission throughout the first 100 years of our existence. The South Asia Institute looks to continue and expand the range of our activities into our second century.

SOAS is home to an exceptional group of scholars. Our coverage of South Asia is greater than any other university Europe. We are therefore distinguished by the breadth of coverage, as well as the depth of our regional vision. We have specialists in everything from politics to yoga and film to fiscal policy. We understand that the past is important and that people speak, write and think in different languages. We are also acutely aware that the global order has shifted since the early days of SOAS and we work now within different paradigms of knowledge and authority. We

are deeply committed to the decolonisation of the university as power shifts in the latest world order.

This is an exciting time to be working alongside colleagues who are deeply engaged in a rapidly-changing region. When I look through the directory of SSAI members, I cannot help but feel as if I have a relatively easy task. We have some of the most innovative and exciting research projects being run by some of the most meticulous and well-known scholars. We have a strong Centre for the Study of Pakistan which highlights the work we undertake in that country. We also have a committed student body which both comes from South Asia to study SOAS subjects and comes from elsewhere to study South Asia through SOAS.

I would like to record my gratitude to Professor Michael Hutt, who launched the Institute and set in train many exciting initiatives, and to Dr Navtej Purewal who, I am delighted to say, remains Deputy Director. I also wish to thank the membership of the SSAI for supporting them and express my hope that I can continue to rely on similarly enthusiastic support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Simpson".

Edward Simpson,
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