

AT THE HEART OF THE NATION: A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION CELEBRATING INDIA IN BRITAIN

Launching in Edinburgh this September, a major new outdoor touring exhibition will honour the long history of the Indian presence in Britain and its impact on British life.



Telling its story through a series of striking photographic images, the exhibition documents the diverse histories which make up the shared heritage of India and Britain from 1870, the earliest image in the exhibition, to the present day.

Curated to coincide with the India-UK Year of Culture for 2017, the exhibition grew out of a decade-long research project exploring South Asian and Indian-British connections. Spanning almost two centuries - from the period of the British Raj through to the better-known era of post-war migration to today - the exhibition, and an accompanying website, is a visual history of India's impact on Britain's cultural, intellectual and political life, national and global politics, human rights and equality, the arts and sport.

Famous personalities are celebrated, alongside images of the ordinary and every day. The images also document moments of adversity and the discrimination faced by those who made their homes here in Britain.

From giants of history to the unnamed and unrecognised, the exhibition shines a light on the many individuals who have shaped British life.

Queen Victoria is depicted with her favoured Munshi, Abdul Karim; Gandhi is pictured visiting female textile workers in Lancashire; and the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, is photographed in London. Soldiers and airmen from the two World Wars, factory workers in Northern England, judges, door-to-door salesman (a familiar sight in 1930s rural Britain), corner shop owners and doctors all show the diversity of the Indian contribution to British working life. There are many courageous campaigners portrayed including pioneering Members of Parliament, suffragettes, trade unionists and men and women who fought for social justice. Sportsmen such as Monty Panesar and octogenarian marathon runner Fauja Singh are celebrated alongside those from the creative fields.

TOUR DATES

17th September – 1st October – EDINBURGH, Edinburgh Mound Precinct

8th October – 15th October – LONDON, London Bridge Pier

16th October – 26th October – LEEDS, Victoria Gardens

Project Director, Professor Susheila Nasta, MBE comments;

“By touring this outdoor exhibition, we want to swivel the perspective and examine India’s role within Britain (rather than Britain’s well documented historical presence in India). The images trace Indian-British interactions across the divides of race, class, and gender, drawing public attention to the complex realities of both countries’ intertwined histories. The accompanying events and online tools will reach wide public audiences. We hope this will fire imaginations and provoke reflection so we remember the huge impact India and South Asia have had on contemporary British life.”

For more information about the exhibition or any of the supporting projects go to

<http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/asianbritain>

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London, United Kingdom



Notes to Editors

The exhibition has been directed by Professor Susheila Nasta (OU) in collaboration with Dr Florian Stadler (Exeter) and Dr Maya Parmar (OU). Based on archival sources from previous projects, *Making Britain: South Asian Visions of Home and Abroad, 1870-1950* (funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council between 2007-10), and *Beyond the Frame: Indian British Connections (2011-13)*, 'At the Heart of the Nation', coincides with the India-UK Year of Culture' for 2017.

The current project has been supported by The Open University, the University of Exeter, the Nehru Centre and the High Commission of India. It forms part of the wider programme for the 2017 India-Britain Year of Culture www.indiaatuk2017.com

Professor Susheila Nasta (Director, OU), Dr Florian Stadler (University of Exeter) and Dr Maya Parmar (OU) curated the exhibition. They will accompany the tour and are available for interview.

For more information about the exhibition or any of the previous research projects go to: www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/asianbritain

The publicly available free, online database Making Britain: How South Asians shaped the nation is available at www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain

This provides information on over 450 South Asians in Britain from 1870 to 1950, the organisations they were involved in, their British connections and the major events in which they participated.

About The Open University

www.open.ac.uk

The Open University (OU) is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 1.8 million students and has almost 170,000 current students, including more than 15,000 overseas. Over 70% of students are in full-time or part-time employment, and four out of five FTSE 100 companies have sponsored staff to take OU courses.

In the latest assessment exercise for university research (Research Excellence Framework, 2014), nearly three quarters (72%) of The Open University's research was assessed as 4 or 3 star – the highest ratings available – and awarded to research that is world-leading or internationally excellent. The Open University is unique among UK universities having both an access mission and demonstrating research excellence.

The OU has a 42 year partnership with the BBC and has moved from late-night lectures in the 1970s to co-producing around 35 prime-time series a year such as *The Hunt*, *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe*, *Full Steam Ahead* and *The Big C and Me* on TV, and *Inside Science*, *The Bottom Line* and *Thinking Allowed* on Radio 4. Our OU viewing and listening events attracted 250m people in the UK last year which prompted more than 780k visits to the OU's free learning website, OpenLearn: www.open.edu/openlearn

Regarded as the UK's major e-learning institution, the OU is a world leader in developing technology to increase access to education on a global scale. Its vast 'open content portfolio' includes free study units, as well as games, videos and academic articles and has reached audiences of up to 9.8 million across a variety of online formats including OpenLearn, YouTube and iTunes U.

About the University of Exeter

www.exeter.ac.uk

The University of Exeter is a Russell Group university that combines world-class research with very high levels of student satisfaction. Exeter has over 21,000 students and is in the top one per cent of universities worldwide. Exeter is also ranked 9th in *The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2017* and 13th in the *Guardian University Guide 2018*. In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), the University ranked 16th nationally, with 98% of its research rated as being of international quality. Exeter was named *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* Sports University of the Year 2015-16, in recognition of excellence in performance, education and research. Exeter was *The Sunday Times* University of the Year 2012-13.

The University launched its flagship Living Systems Institute in 2016, a world-class, interdisciplinary research community that will revolutionise the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. This follows recent investments of more than £350 million worth of new facilities across its campuses in recent years; including landmark new student services centres - the Forum in Exeter and The Exchange on the Penryn Campus in Cornwall, together with world-class new facilities for Biosciences, the Business School and the Environment and Sustainability Institute.